


ENGLAND'S ARCH-ENEMY

D. C. BOULGER





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ENGLAND'S ARCH - ENEMY

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS FORMING AN
INDICTMENT OF GERMAN POLICY DURING
THE LAST SIXTEEN YEARS

BY

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF BELGIUM," ETC.

"That State inclines to its fall which treats Home Politics as of greater importance than Foreign Policy."—EMILE BANNING (Belgian Philosopher)

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FOREWORD

IN two articles published in the *Contemporary Review* in the year 1898, I denounced the German Emperor as "our arch-opponent" and "the arch-enemy of England." In a long succession of articles published in several other Reviews and magazines from that period down to the present day, I have done my best in exposing each German move on the political chessboard, and in calling attention to the fact that Germany's one aim throughout was to oust England from her command of the sea and thus dispossess her of some of her colonies and dependencies.

I do not think that any other public writer has tracked for so many years or with the same persistency the development of German policy, and the task was not easy and met with slight encouragement. The most friendly and considerate editor looked askance at what he termed the alarmist article, and many of these essays had adventures and wanderings before they found their haven in the accepted list for publication. But the most obstinate and deep-rooted prejudice I encountered was the general and widespread belief, diligently promoted by the most influential Germans resident among us, in the personal friendship of the Emperor William and in his pacific disposition. From many highly placed persons the following criticism often reached me:—"We daresay you may be right about the drift of German policy, but you are quite wrong about the German Emperor, as he is our friend and has no thought of war with us. We know this on the best authority." These authorities were generally the Cabinet Ministers, who trusted blindly to the pacific assurances of the potential enemy, and who never gave a thought to providing for the safety of their country. They can never hope to be regarded by posterity as anything

else than mere party men, actuated not by patriotism, but by love of office.

As I am not reproducing the two *Contemporary* articles, which related more especially to the Far Eastern question, I quote here the passages from them dealing with the Emperor personally, from which the title of this volume is taken.

1. "The Problem in the Far East" (*Contemporary Review* for February, 1898):

"The action of Germany at Kiaochao has at least the one advantage that it has compelled the British Government and the British public to concentrate their attention on the problem in the Far East. When we have to thank him least of all men, some recognition for providing that timely and salutary impulse is due to the Emperor William, our arch-opponent on the Continent, where he is credited, perhaps not figuratively, with concluding all his political correspondence in the words of Cato: "Hunc addio, Carthaginem esse delendam. . . ." The Emperor William must be judged by the acts he sanctions and not by the soothing expressions with which he would lull us into a sense of security or apathy. They may pass current in family circles, but they can be allowed no weight in the Councils of State. The violence of the speech at Kiel, when Germany was told to strike with her mailed fist decrepit China, had to be toned down by Prince Henry's visit to Osborne and by his frantic attempt, during that mysterious journey to London, to deliver a personal message to the Prince of Wales, which the latter's tact appears to have baffled. . . . When the Prince of Wales is pursued even to his private box in a theatre (it was the Duke of York's) so that he may have to listen to the Imperial explanation that braggadocio at Kiel does not signify a Belshazzar's warning for England, it is high time for the German ruler to take a lesson in manners as well as in the arcana of Far Eastern politics."

2. "The Arch-Enemy of England" (*Contemporary Review* for December, 1898):

"But while he lapses now and again into utterances of emotional tenderness towards the inhabitants of these islands, the settled purpose of his life remains. This is to make Germany the leading commercial and Colonial State of the world. . . . In the realisation of the German Emperor's designs England stood and stands in the way. Germany can only become the leading commercial and colonial Power by her downfall. The consummation of that catastrophe becomes therefore the first and the essential condition for the success of the Emperor's policy. . . . There is great reason to fear that there is misconception as to the real policy and objects of the German Emperor. The time has not come for him to display the whole of his hand, and in the meantime his representations are accepted and he is regarded as a possible ally."

The claim of these articles to be brought together and preserved in a more durable form than that of the monthly

periodical must be judged by the information they may have contained of permanent value on serious political and military matters, many of which are still of vital importance.

I have placed the three articles of the greatest topical interest first, but with those exceptions I have followed the chronological order of their publication. "The German Plan of Campaign" has been almost realised to the letter. As the *Belgique Militaire* said of it last August in its final issue before the German occupation of Brussels, "Mr. Boulger alone foretold exactly what the Germans intended to do in Belgium."

I have in conclusion to express my gratitude to the Editors of the various Reviews for a double obligation—first for having published my writings, and secondly for allowing me to republish them here.

DEMETRIUS C. BOULGER.

ENGLAND'S ARCH-ENEMY

BRITISH DISTRUST OF GERMANY*

“ By far the most dangerous foe to England in the future.”—

The late Marquis of Salisbury.

WHEN a certain number of sentimental persons, more or less distinguished in inoffensive pursuits that keep them aloof from the stern and implacable competitions and rivalries of nations and empires, meet together for the purpose of promoting friendship and good-will between their own people and government and the people and government of another country, the easier and more convenient course would be to refrain from criticism of their proceedings for the sake of their good intentions. Such, no doubt, would have been the general attitude towards the Anglo-German Conciliation Committee if the meeting at the Caxton Hall on the 1st of December had stood alone.

But it was followed by other demonstrations which seem to show that an “ organised ” effort is being made to create a factitious friendship between England and Germany which the organisers by their very efforts proclaim has no real existence. The relations of England and Germany, as Powers, are, in the German Emperor's words, “ correct,” but as men, as communities, they must be described as strained. To remedy this state of things there has suddenly and mysteriously come into prominence an organisation specially founded, it would seem, not to help a spontaneous and natural movement of the English and German peoples towards friendship with each other, but

* *The Nineteenth Century and After*, January, 1906.

to force England to sue for the friendship of Germany! The concluding words of the German Ambassador's address in London are not obscure, however surprising, and leave no room for doubt on this point. "Englishmen," he said, "are to show in a manner that can be heard that they wish to be the friends" of the Germans, and then if we "continue to do that for a little while the bad feeling between us and the Germans will speedily pass away." We are not merely to sue but to go on suing—as if German friendship were of greater value to us than English friendship would be for Germans—and then, perhaps, after an unspecified interval the Germans will forgive us. For what? For Kruger messages, for Imperial vapourings about wielding the trident and being Admiral of the Atlantic? Count Metternich did not tell his audience.

The scene of the more noticeable of these demonstrations was a recently established Ladies' Club, and it must be admitted that Count Metternich chose for his somewhat unusual ambassadorial display a locale in which he might rely with some confidence on manifestations of sympathy, and, still more important for his purpose, on ignorance—if this may be said without offence to the fair members of the Club—of the prosaic facts on which our distrust of German policy and our resentment at much that has been said and done in Germany of late years have been built up. Still, if ladies are to figure on the political platform in connection with questions that, until the Amazons again appear on earth, will have to be settled by men, it is more agreeable and appropriate that they should do so in the guise of Irene than in the panoply of Bellona.

The remarks of the German Ambassador at this demonstration in our own capital are not, however, to be gauged by themselves. They must be measured by the contemporaneous important statements in the Emperor William's speech at the opening of the Reichstag on the 28th of November, and in the still more remarkable speech of the German Chancellor, Prince Bülow, in the same Assembly eight days later. Those Imperial and semi-Imperial statements about German relations with a Power which is nominally on terms of amity, and whose attitude is even admitted to be "correct," are without precedent in the

annals of international intercourse. The language of the Emperor William and of Prince Bülow has never been used in official utterances except on the eve of an open rupture and a declaration of war. There is no mistaking the threats addressed to us from Berlin, if we do not follow the recommendations of the German Ambassador in London. In order to fulfil these threats we may reasonably anticipate that the German Government will have little or no difficulty in getting its new, formidable, and menacing Navy Bill passed by the Reichstag, for the true gravity of the situation is caused by the views of a large, if not the larger, part of the German nation being thoroughly in sympathy with the aspirations of their ruler. As a matter of fact, expressions of civility and just consideration for England emanate from the mouth of Herr Bebel, the Socialist leader, alone among Germany's public men.

The question of Anglo-German relations is indeed a matter that calls for the most serious attention of all Englishmen, because they should be prepared for every contingency. We do not know what the real intentions of the German Emperor are, and although he seems now and then to desire peace he has been so long rattling his sword in the scabbard that it might come out at any moment without his intending it. An order for instantaneous mobilisation lies on his table ever ready for signature. The fatal stroke may be given in a fit of impatience or passion, and *volat irrevocabile verbum*.

The German Ambassador touched on some aspects of the question of Anglo-German relations in his speech, but he studiously avoided the real points. In this he was but following the lead set him by his countryman Mr. Karl Blind in the pages of this Review a month earlier. Mr. Blind gave his readers a good deal of ancient history, without perceiving that the very reasons which led England to oppose Louis the Fourteenth and the great Napoleon are those which to-day compel us to see in Germany, and still more in the Emperor William, our arch-enemy. It is an irrelevancy to say that "Englishmen and Germans have never crossed swords" in the past, when every German paper has for many years been regaling its readers with assertions that England ought to be chastised, and

also that it would not be difficult to do it. Mr. Blind claims to speak for his native land from which he was exiled fifty-seven years ago, but the "inoffensive," "un-aggressive" and "friendly" Germany that he describes is only a figment of his own imagination. It is certainly not the Germany of to-day. A protest also must be made against the reference to English public writers in both the Ambassador's speech and Mr. Blind's article. If Englishmen feel called upon to speak strongly on the subject of German policy it is only because they have satisfied themselves, by close study of German official declarations and by carefully watching German actions, that that policy is hostile to their country, and constitutes its greatest, I might even say its only, peril. We have not to explain what the German Ambassador is pleased to call "our nasty remarks about other countries" to any one but our own conscience, or at any other bar save that of the public opinion of our own country. It may seem to some of us, indeed, that His Excellency's rebuke would have been better addressed to the German publicists who have been predicting the downfall of England for years past, or even to Mr. Blind himself, whose assertion that the Prussians "would have sealed the fate of those 40,000 English troops in a trice," if we had intervened on behalf of France in the autumn of 1870, is one of those characteristic German phrases that always gain for the Germans the love of persons not born in "the Fatherland." Has Mr. Blind's long residence here led to his knowing us so little that he thinks the loss of 40,000 men even "in a trice" would have deterred Great Britain from prosecuting to a victorious conclusion a work to which she had once set her hand?

The German Ambassador, as I have said, did not touch upon the real points that explain the variance between Englishmen and Germans. He showed skill in avoiding them, for he must know very well what they are. But if he is really desirous of seeing a better understanding between the two countries and peoples, he must take note of the main points, ignore the trivial side issues, and satisfy us of the error of the convictions slowly forced upon us, but that are now every day taking firmer root in the minds of all Englishmen.

The sole original cause of the estrangement of England from, let me say, as it will please the pedants, her historical German ally, is the unnecessary, excessive, and menacing growth of the German Navy. If Count Metternich is not already aware of this truth, he can easily verify the statement for himself, and then, perhaps, he will feel able to report to the Emperor that the true way of disarming English suspicion and of removing our ill feeling is to discontinue his ever-increasing outlay on a war fleet. If the German Emperor takes this course, and as some proof of his good-will he can at once withdraw the Navy Bill now before the Reichstag, he will quickly ascertain what is the basis of British distrust. He can thus achieve a success, with regard to producing a change in our opinion about Germany, that the presentation of his portrait to our military clubs, or the despatch of congratulatory telegrams to Conciliating Committees will never effect. If the Emperor were to do this he would be acting with true wisdom, and at least he would be able to say that he had done something tangible to show that he had no design of ousting England from her paramount position on the sea.

I have given the root cause of the suspicion, and even apprehension, with which England has regarded German policy and proceedings of recent years. There is no reference to it in the Ambassador's speech. But the growth of the German fleet cannot be separated from the declarations of policy made to explain that growth. It is not as a play-thing that Prussia has been forming a great navy since the opening of the dock at Wilhelmshaven in 1869. It is not for mere amusement that in some years her programme of battleship-building has been even larger than our own. The German Emperor has himself told us what his object was and is. In the first phase it was merely to found "a greater Germany beyond the seas." That was at the commencement of his reign, and might have been harmless. Soon his ambition and views became larger. His next assertions were to the effect that "Germany's future is on the water," that "the trident must be in our hands," and then came the vaunting declaration that "no decision can now be taken in distant lands or beyond the ocean without

the participation and permission of Germany and the German Emperor." Finally, there was the memorable and extraordinary telegram to the Tsar at Reval from the Emperor William styling himself "Admiral of the Atlantic!" It is true that since that telegram to "the Admiral of the Pacific," the Tsar has lost his fleet. It is also true since the British fleet has been redistributed on a different plan from formerly that the Emperor William has been more reserved in the matter of boasting about naval power. But for material consolation he has caused to be presented to the Reichstag a Navy Bill more extensive and more formidable than anything of the kind in the past.

The German apologists may say, and indeed have said, What has the growth of the German Navy to do with you, as it is a question for the German people alone? This argument is transparently silly, and will not impose on anyone. The strength of the German Navy is quite as vital a question for us as the strength and efficiency of the French and Russian armies are for Germany. There is no necessity to repeat the arguments that justify our desire and our determination to maintain our naval superiority over all possible enemies. As Tennyson wrote:—

"The fleet of England is her all-in-all

And in her fleet her Fate."

If a German ruler ever holds "the trident" or can be described as "Admiral of the Atlantic," our fate is sealed. We shall become a German colony, and did not Count Metternich say at Hamburg, before leaving to take up his present post, that England "was the first of Germany's colonies"? Mr. Blind says that the German Navy was justified because Germany had to expect attacks on two fronts, and he reminds his reader that on paper the Russian fleet "was" numerically stronger than that of Germany. One may call this a belated argument, for the Russian fleet has practically ceased to exist, and some newer "catch phrase" than "facing attack on two sides" will have to be found to explain or justify the present Navy Bill with its enormous increase of ships, and its addition of about sixty millions sterling to the Navy estimates for the next twelve years.

No one can follow the growth of the German Navy during the last twenty years without arriving at the conclusion that it does, and is meant to, menace this country. There is fortunately no reason as yet to believe that the German Navy has reached a point of equality with our own—even German optimists did not expect that till the year 1912—but its proximity to our shores, added to the fact that its whole force can be, and is, held conveniently ready for concentration in the North Sea at the first signal, has already compelled us to readjust our whole defence-system, and to recall much of our scattered naval force to its base. In many points of naval efficiency, too, the Germans had stolen a march upon us, and it is only within the last few years that we have remedied our shortcomings and again forged ahead. We owe it, for instance, to German example that our naval experts were at last compelled to realise that battles on the sea are to be won by gun fire, and not by coal capacity; and the theorists of the Baltic had come to the conclusion that battles might be fought and won at a distance of 7,000 yards, when our school were still wedded to the old belief of coming to close quarters, and quite ridiculed fire being effective at more than half the named distance. Then again we must remember that our alleged superior building power, on which we were wont to lay so much stress, has not been established. In 1899 Lord Goschen, then at the Admiralty, in a speech intended as a reply to the German Naval programme of that year, declared proudly that "we would if necessary build two or even three ships to every one built by Germany." Well, the threat was not fulfilled. We have not done, and what is more we could not do, what Lord Goschen asserted we would. The German fleet has ever since progressed nearer and nearer to a level with our own.

But the question of Germany's fleet cannot be considered alone and by itself. The policy behind it must be taken into account. It was strengthened in the early days of its development for the express purpose of creating "a greater Germany," or in other words of founding colonies. Well, Germany has obtained colonies in East and West Africa, among the Isles of the Pacific, and elsewhere. In obtaining

them she owed much to the good-will and the assistance of England. She has forgotten that, but no matter. Are Germans contented with the possession of these colonial appendages? Have they got any profit or other satisfaction out of them? Ask any German, and he will tell you with a wry face that they have cost and are costing many millions, and that there appears to be no limit to the growing deficit of the Colonial Budget. The episode of the Herrero rebellion is a still more painful subject; it seems to have cost Germany almost as much as our last Afghan war, and a real stable peace, for all the local officials say, is still unassured. Yet Prince Bülow the other day laid down the principle that "Germany has a material interest that those territories in the world which are still free should not be further limited," and that she has the right of placing what value she pleases on her claims and interests where a microscopical examination by impartial onlookers fails to discover the existence of any German interests at all. Such was very much the case in Morocco, and a repetition of the proceedings at Fez and Tangiers seems to be imminent with regard to Abyssinia.

Notwithstanding this wish to restrict the action of other States, there is a half admission in German colonial circles that the colonising experiments in the regions mainly acquired by Prince Bismarck have proved more or less costly failures. But at the same time as the admission is made new hopes have been created by the success of German merchants resident in British colonies. There no failure to make the best of colonial opportunities and to wax prosperous has to be recorded. At Singapore, in several Australian States, the German is to the fore. He comes to the head in every branch of trade and he ousts the long-established Englishman. He does not display administrative skill or organising power, that is all provided for him by the British official, but as a dealer in goods or in money his ability is not to be contested. Much of his success is due to his readiness to work at all times and his refusal to waste half his day in idleness or amusement. But the really serious part of the matter is that this success, which is no secret, has brought into existence a new school of colonial propagandists in Germany. They

show their just appreciation of facts by demanding "ready-made colonies." "Ready-made colonies" is an alternative phrase for conquests. Mr. Blind declares that Germany has no designs on Holland. His assurance is far from convincing, and is not shared by the Dutch themselves. Moreover, Prussia never has any designs before the moment has arrived to put them in execution. It is the secret of the success of the Hohenzollern legend, not to talk but to strike. But "ready-made colonies" are for the moment to be sought for not in European-owned dependencies, but in decrepit states like Morocco, or others that need support like Turkey, as well as in kingdoms recently opened by the enterprise of Frenchmen and Englishmen to the outer world, such as Abyssinia. In none of these territories would Germany have to take upon herself any administrative duties. What she wants are concessions and political influence with the ruler, so that her counsels may alone be heeded. She has succeeded at Constantinople, she has created an involved situation in Morocco out of which no way of peaceful extrication may be found, and it will not be her fault if she fails to produce as much trouble at Adis Abeba as she has done at Fez. As Prince Bülow asserts, "the importance of these interests is immaterial." "Whether it is a case of five marks or of five thousand" Germany reserves to herself the right of deciding what her own course shall be. In plainer words, she is ready to make five shillings' worth of German shoddy a *casus belli*. The world is forewarned.

But the ambition to acquire "ready-made colonies" is not limited to countries that are nobody's colonies. That represents only the first phase in this later development of the system of "world politics." As soon as the German fleet is strong enough Germany will want the colonies of other States. Holland, Belgium, France and then England provide them in their likely order of attempted acquisition. But in the meanwhile the position in each and all of them can be surveyed and sapped.

The German Chancellor and the German Ambassador are in error when they think that English distrust of Germany is of quite recent growth. It began as long ago as 1875, when it was due to the joint efforts of Queen

Victoria and the Emperor Alexander that Germany was deterred from falling upon France, and in the Bismarckian phrase "completing her work." I have before me, as I write, a correspondence between the late Lord Lytton on the one side, and Lord Salisbury and Sir Henry Rawlinson on the other, during the summer of 1877. The following extract from one of Lord Lytton's letters in July of the year named shows what were the views of the Beaconsfield-Salisbury Cabinet about Germany.

In your (Sir H. Rawlinson's) very interesting letter you say that the Queen's Government "is determined not to fall out with Russia" because "we shall need her support before very long against Germany, who is considered to be by far the most dangerous foe to England in the future."

Lord Salisbury, in one or two of his recent letters to me, has hinted at the same apprehension about Germany as a reason for conciliating Russia at the present moment.

In face of this evidence it is impossible to contend that the suspicion and misgivings entertained by a large proportion of the English people about German policy are of recent growth, or that they have only been created by our public writers during the last few years.

Everything that has happened since 1877 in our relations with Germany gives force to the opinion I have quoted, but it is no longer the monopoly of statesmen to describe Germany as England's "most dangerous foe." Mr. Blind and Count Metternich, turning up the pages of history, repeat what everybody knows, that England and Germany have never been at war. What they omit to tell their readers or their listeners is that the Germany of the past was a very different State from the Germany of the present. It was a Germany without a Navy. It was a Germany swayed at first by the mild and unaggressive Hapsburgs, and then later on divided into two separate and rival hegemonies directed from Vienna and Berlin, which to some extent neutralised each other. But all that is passed and done with. The Germany of to-day is not merely united, it is aggressive. It wields the thunderbolt on land, it clutches at the trident on the sea. The Grand Monarque never had such power; if the great Napoleon had it for a time he lost it through mistakes that the Germans are not likely to repeat. In their careful calculations there will

be no place for Moscow campaigns, or profitless enterprises in Spain. Napoleon fell because he squandered his strength in attempting too much; Germany, when she falls, will not do so from any failure to concentrate her strength on only a single and definite object at a time.

Moreover, if it is literally correct to say that "Englishmen and Germans have never crossed swords in war," it is none the less true that England has several times opposed Prussian policy in a way showing that she was ready to appeal to the arbitrament of arms. She did so in 1815 when Prussia wished to dismember France by annexing Alsace and seizing the Vosges frontier. Mr. Blind's reference to this matter forms an interesting addition to the Emperor William's boastful assertion that "the Germans saved the English army at Waterloo." This is what he wrote in these pages about the attempt of the Prussians to secure both banks of the Rhine in 1815: "The Germans all the more bitterly remembered what had happened after the overthrow of Napoleon the First through the influence of the Duke of Wellington, to whose aid Blücher had come on the field of Waterloo." Mr. Blind's argument is that because Blücher did his duty as a soldier and as an ally at Waterloo, England should have acquiesced in all Prussia's nefarious schemes. What we did was to conclude a Convention with the King of France to defend his territory against German greed.

But that was not the only occasion on which we faced the alternative of war with Prussia. We forbade her interference, and that of her colleagues in the Holy Alliance, with France in 1830, and with Belgium in 1830-1. We stood up for France in 1875 against a threat of inhuman aggression that was intended to entail her annihilation, and we sent a military commission to Belgium to prepare the way for active operations. So erudite a person as Mr. Blind cannot but be aware of these little passages in history that somewhat detract from the obligatory force of the alliance between ourselves and the Germans which has been handed down from antiquity, and upon which he lays so much stress. We have opposed, and we shall continue to oppose, "the overweening ambition" of Prussia, in its newly spun garb of Germany, just as resolutely, and, we

will not doubt, just as successfully as we opposed the tyrants and would-be dictators of Europe in the past. But at the same time we will not altogether abandon the hope that a sense of her position may inculcate the practice at Berlin of the same moderation as was displayed on the four historical occasions to which I have referred, when Germans learnt that they could not have matters all their own way.

If the German Government is really desirous of removing the "distrust" in this country which, as I have shown, did not spring up yesterday, but has been slowly growing during the last thirty years, it will modify its naval schemes and abandon its ambition to rule the seas. Of course I know very well that it will do nothing of the kind; any lingering hope on that point would be stifled by Mr. Blind's declaration that "if a Republic were established in the Fatherland its naval policy would still have to remain the same." That being so, the distrust must continue until active antagonism is substituted for passive dislike and suspicion.

The people of this country, encompassed by the still inviolate sea, do not realise the extreme gravity of the situation in Europe. England wishes always for the preservation of peace. Even in the face of menace and intentional provocation—it is curious to note how in speeches that are intended to be amicable German insolence surely creeps in—her people still cling to the belief that the greatest of British interests is peace. But there is a limit beyond which it is not safe to taunt or to threaten us. Gibes from the German Emperor are like dragon's teeth, they may bring up men in arms as they have already produced discord. Perhaps a glimmering of the truth has dawned on him, for suddenly without any apparent reason there is a change. The taunts, except for some unfortunate expressions which reveal the true German nature, are kept suppressed; there is a very remarkable and very condescending display of effort to remove "profound dislike" and to substitute friendship. What is the motive of these proceedings? Why has the Berlin executive, which never acts haphazardly, gone out of its way to be civil to this country, in, it is true, a clumsy and blundering fashion?

Why do the Emperor and his Chancellor breathe, at the same time that they make these overtures to us for concord, nothing but threats, alarms, and boastful vauntings in their speeches, made not to the German nation alone, but to the whole world? Why are we told that Germany is strong enough to act "without allies," and to rely solely on herself? England is all for peace, France is notoriously pacific, Russia is absorbed in her own troubles, why does the German Emperor—who in his own opinion is the Jupiter Fulminator of the present age—flash his lightning shafts in a clear sky?

These are questions that must ever recur to us. If we cannot furnish the answer to a secret that is probably locked in the Emperor William's own bosom, and hidden from his ministers and ambassadors, we can at least get ourselves ready to ward off the blow whenever it comes, and not allow ourselves to be taken by surprise. We may in my opinion draw one safe conclusion from the Emperor's speech and that of his Chancellor. He is contemplating an act of aggression in which Germany will have to dispense with the co-operation of its partners in the strictly defensive pact called "the Triple Alliance." The contemplation may require some months to develop into action; on the other hand, it may terminate at any moment, and confront us with a crisis. It is improbable that we are his first and immediate object, and the time has certainly not arrived for any encroachment on the rights of neutral States. There is consequently no alternative to the conclusion that the Emperor is on the look-out for a pretext to attack France, and pretexts in the field of international rivalry are ever found easily when they are diligently sought for.

No one will seriously deny that last June France and Germany were brought to the verge of war by the action of the German Emperor in Morocco. The manner in which war was then averted is still secret history, but at least one of the most important contributories to the baffling of the plot was the remarkable forbearance and self-restraint of the French people. Their admirable demeanour when confronted with an unprovoked and flagrant provocation will not soon pass out of memory, but, as I wrote in the

July number of this Review, there is a limit to the patience of a proud people. Already a marked change has taken place in the tone of the French press. France is still studiously and honestly on the side of peace, but there has been a notable revival in the courage and confidence of the nation. If the coming Conference on the Morocco question reveals some fresh unpleasantries they will not be received so quietly as was the attack on M. Delcassé; if Berlin renews her insults they will not be taken lying down. While the scenery and stage properties are being got ready for a European tragedy the German Emperor makes his effort to lull us to sleep. He must take us for children or for fools.

If he wants the good-will of the people of this country the Emperor William can obtain it only by removing the causes of our distrust. On the one hand he has to curtail instead of increasing the expenditure on the German war fleet. Not less important, he must abandon the design of making any unprovoked attack on France. If he makes that attack, trusting because Russia is down that France will be left on her own single resources to oppose his "overweening ambition," he will commit the first stupendous blunder in Hohenzollern history. He will be emulating the bad example of those French "scourges of mankind" in the past, recalled by Mr. Karl Blind, and he may discover very quickly that he is not only "without allies," but that he has made himself an object of reprobation to the rest of the world. The English people are loth at all times to draw the sword. They certainly would not think "interests of the value of five marks" or even "of five thousand marks" worth magnifying into a *casus belli*. But on the other hand they would not, and they could not, stand idly by while Germany proceeded to shed the life-blood of France. They would not do this in 1815 after twenty years of strife with France; they are still less inclined to do so now after ninety years of peace and friendship with their closest neighbour. Nor are the races of the United Kingdom—many of whom, like my own,*

* Personal items: Demetrius = Dermot—an old family name latinised on the Continent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into Demetrius: *e.g.*, Demetrius de Kavanagh, my ancestor, killed as Field-Marshal-Lieutenant under Prince Eugene at Belgrade in 1715.

have not a drop of Teutonic blood in their veins—so blind and stupid as not to see that the hour of German aggression on the Vosges would be the psychological moment to put an end for all time to Germany's claim to grasp the trident.

Boulger = Leinster sept of O'Boulger or O'Bolger, deprived of patronymic in Queen Elizabeth's reign (1559). William O'Bolger (Gulielmus O'Bolgire) was the first Irishman allowed by Patent to hold lands within the Pale by Richard Duke of York in 1453.

There is hardly any doubt that the surname Boulger has the same root as Belgian ("Belgæ" = "Bolg," skin : the race that clothed themselves in the skins of animals). "The wild O'Bolgers of the hills," who figure somewhat prominently in the Tudor chronicle of the campaigns with Art MacMurragh, were in all probability of Menapian, that is Belgian, descent.

GERMANY'S ONE AND ONLY AIM*

IN different directions, from the mouth of the German Ambassador in London, and in official statements in the Reichsrath at Berlin, we find assertions about the improving relations between England and Germany. Lovers of peace-at-any-price, that is to say, a deceptive peace, giving the prospective enemy time to get ready for a successful war, implore the press not to say a word that would irritate Germany, as if she cared a fig for what is said about her as long as she is left in undisturbed tranquillity to complete her plans for "the day." For an illusory hope such as this those who have been following with close vigilance the development of Germany's plans for twenty years past are entreated to be silent, or when that seems vain every effort is made to gag them by persuading editors that frank statements are not merely indiscreet but provocative. The British public is kept as far as possible in the dark as to the true drift of German policy and the development of the force which is to carry it into effect. Another attempt is made in this paper to spread a knowledge of Germany's one and only aim.

The strength and the success of Prussian policy has always lain in its power of concentration. The Elector of Brandenburg resolved to be King of Prussia; he joined the Grand Alliance, his troops attracted attention on the battle-fields of Belgium as the best drilled of the Germans under William of Orange, and he became King. Frederick the Great resolved to steal Silesia so that it might serve as a wedge between Bohemia and Poland; he took it by superior military force and held it, thanks to England, against the combined attack of Austria, France and Russia. His successors continued and completed his

* *British Review*, May, 1914.

work of making Prussia the equal of Austria in Germany. They succeeded, and then not content with equality, they ousted Austria altogether from Germany, of which the Hapsburg Empire no longer forms part. Having brought the German princes to her heel Prussia turned on France in 1870, and destroyed the belief in French military supremacy.

Having done all these things, Germany, as Prussia for this phase of history must be called, took in a new horizon. Europe had become too small for her. Her gaze ranged over the ocean to those far distant lands whence the raw material that would keep her factories busy might be drawn at little cost through the cheapness of labour and the backwardness of knowledge among primitive races. But as she gazed she saw a new rival, a more fortunate competitor who, by being earlier in the race, had obtained possession of the fairest regions of the earth. That competitor was England, and just as Prussia had ousted Austria from Germany, so did the new Germany set herself to the task of ousting England from that command of the seas which had come to be regarded here as a prescriptive right.

Germany's one and only aim then is to destroy the belief in England's invincibility at sea, and to that end she has created an immense navy which, whatever its value in war may prove to be, is on paper and in organisation second to that of England alone. But it is even more significant to know that in the essential requirements for the construction of a navy (shipyards, steel works, and cannon foundries) Germany is quite on a level with ourselves even if she is not, as some say, slightly ahead of us. But the Prussian principle has ever been to defer striking the blow until she felt sure that the balance of power to be brought into play on the fixed scene was in her favour. If the question at issue were solely as to whether Germany is to supplant England as the first Naval Power in the World, it is probable that the present hollow peace with its crushing and ever-increasing annual expenditure, would remain unbroken for some more years, simply because Germany is not yet sure that she can equal or surpass the exploits of Tromp and De Ruyter.

But there are other elements in the problem. Germany cannot ignore the new French army. She cannot leave Russia out of her calculations. These neighbours suggest matters of more immediate and imperative necessity than the direct challenge of England's superiority at sea. For a time she thought she could lull England to sleep while she crippled France, but she discovered her mistake in September, 1911, and ever since she has been concentrating all her naval power in the North Sea so that she may give our fleet full employment, and render it impossible for us to send an army to the Continent during the first three weeks following the crossing of the Dutch, Belgian, and French frontiers by her own armies.

The ultimate and final smashing of the British fleet is to stand over for a subsequent epoch. What is immediately to be accomplished is the hindrance and damaging of that fleet, and of the naval harbours and arsenals behind it, by a succession of sudden raids and desperate attacks from Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven—seconded by the airships and armoured aeroplanes which are being concentrated north and south of Hamburg, directly opposite our coast—with the object of making it impossible for this country to send troops to the Continent in the first part of the campaign. For this task and mission the German naval authorities believe themselves to be ready, while the aerial branch of their War Department has made such enormous strides of late that it, too, is ready to take on the task.

But important as Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven are in the German scheme of naval concentration on the shores of the North Sea, the latest development invests Heligoland and Borkum with separate rôles of action that are complementary to the others, but scarcely less important. Heligoland, which we ceded to Germany on assurances that it would only serve as a summer resort for the merchants of Hamburg, has been fortified in such a way as to make it resemble a miniature Malta, but still more significant is it to find that it is to be the station for a Zeppelin of the largest size. A revolving shed which sinks into a concrete pit, specially prepared for its concealment from attack by aeroplane, has been constructed, and for all we know to the contrary, the Zeppelin that

will be charged with the attempt to destroy one of our arsenals, is already housed there. Borkum, always important on account of its strong defences, is to play a new part as the screen or cover for the torpedo squadron that is to be concentrated at the mouth of the Ems, with its base at Emden. Although it is not likely that this squadron will be raised to the strength of the one at Wilhelmshaven, the use of the Ems estuary adds another to the available starting points for the dispatch of the advanced force of the German fleet which is destined to reach our coast and hamper our own concentration on, or more probably before, the declaration of war. With supreme confidence in the inability of the British people to show resentment, Germany has loaded and now presents her revolver, in the shape of a very formidable navy and air fleet, at our head. Soon we may expect to hear the old highwayman's challenge to "stand and deliver."

Having thus briefly noticed the means available for the realisation of German policy, the rest of our attention will be given to the task of discovering and describing what that policy is. The one and only aim, thanks to the solidity of the Triple Entente, must remain in abeyance until other matters have been attended to, and it is now reluctantly conceded at Berlin that the decision of the military superiority on land must precede that on sea. Germany's most pressing desire, therefore, is to have the triumph of 1870 confirmed and completed as soon as possible.

But until the psychological moment arrives there is not to be the least warning beyond such oracular expressions as that "war sometimes comes like a thief in the night," with which the German official papers often qualify their optimistic predictions. Every officer and official along the frontiers will continue to inform those who come in contact with them that peace is assured, that Germany is the last to dream of war, and so it will be until the signal comes over the wires, by telegraph and telephone, to move forward. The word and the blow will be simultaneous.

In forming an opinion as to the drift and ends of German policy, we should distinguish between the permanent fixed motives and those of an incidental and

transitory nature. The former is the acquisition of commerce, colonies, and that control of World-policy in which Germany has a smaller share than she thinks her due. In all these matters France is no rival or obstacle. Germany has only this country to take into serious account. But Germany has no free hand as long as France possesses an army which is convinced that it will succeed in reversing the decision of the last war. Germany would have liked a friendly understanding with France while she concentrated the whole of her strength on a blow at England. When she found this unattainable she thought she could fall on France without our interfering, and then on realising the truth two years ago, all her rage and venom fastened on this country. "England is our enemy," became the stock phrase from one end of Western Germany to the other. But spleen is not a serviceable weapon in the political armoury. It was felt that the German fleet was not ready to play an effective part until Wilhelmshaven could receive the High Sea squadron, and, consequently the Moroccan crisis was composed. But the German fleet is now believed to be sufficiently strong and well placed to be at least very troublesome, and the German view has once more veered round to the conclusion that the time will shortly be ripe to fall on France, and at the same moment deal this country a heavy blow by a sudden and startling attack by sea and air.

Two distinct motives are impelling Germany to run all the risks and seek a consummation for some of her plans by force of arms. One is anxiety as to the new position created in South-east Europe by the rise of the Balkan States and the decline of Turkey. The other is the realisation of the fact that Russia is becoming more formidable as a military and naval Power every year.

When Berlin turns to scrutinise the Russian position, she finds cause not for immediate apprehension, but for future anxiety. The conviction held there that Russia cannot mobilise a sufficiently large army to take a serious part in a great war until several weeks after it has begun, is far too deep-rooted to be easily shaken, but perhaps the anticipatory mobilisations (repeated in three successive years) in Poland of over a quarter of a million men, may

have somewhat shaken this belief, for it gives evidence that Russia does not mean to be caught napping during the later months of autumn, and if Russia can strike a heavy blow in East Prussia and Galicia in the first fifteen days of a war, then the strategists of Berlin and Vienna will be very much disconcerted, and may find their best-laid plans go awry. On the whole, however, the probabilities are that the German view is right in assuming that Russian movements will still be slow, and that several weeks must elapse before Germany and Austria will find any formidable Russian force in front of them. This contingency throws a greater obligation on this country to be able to co-operate at once with France on her northern and eastern frontiers.

Germany has very clear views as to how she is to recoup herself for the sacrifices of the colossal war she is preparing for against all her western neighbours. Germany will bleed them white as the first step in attaining maritime supremacy. The German Emperor once dubbed himself the Admiral of the Atlantic; but it is the substance more than the title that he covets. As an auxiliary in his schemes he has incited Austria to make herself mistress of the Mediterranean, well knowing that Austria could not stand in this position alone. But Germany is behind her, and new strategic railways will be directed towards the Adriatic and the Ægean, so that a fresh impulse may be given to German-Austrian expansion towards Asia Minor and the Persian Gulf. These are the goals of a more or less distant future, but the preliminaries are being arranged without needless delay.

Under these circumstances the question must be asked—Is the British Government ready to do its duty at once, the moment Germany throws down the glove? Has it made any fresh and fuller preparations since those of September, 1911? They fell very far short of what the occasion required, and in the meantime Germany has added another army corps to her western garrisons with a peace effective of nearly 30,000 men. She has done the same thing on her eastern frontier, but that is Russia's affair, and does not directly concern us. We must remember that Germany, as the main feature in her strategy, is

resolved at any sacrifice to obtain decisive successes within the first fortnight of her armies crossing the frontier. An indication of her view is furnished in the remark of one of her ablest generals who declared in an address the other day that "if the English are not in Antwerp within the first five days of the war, *they will never be in it.*" Yet the Belgians believe not only that they can hold it alone, but that it is impregnable. The German general allowed two days for the army to get there *viâ* Dalheim and Roermond, and three days to take it. Which view will prove correct?

But we are not thinking of Antwerp when we talk of the British expedition to the Continent that *must* co-operate effectively or ineffectively with the French army. The fortune of the war will be decided not in sieges, but in the open field, and it will be of the highest importance for the British troops to reach the front wherever it may be in time to participate in the opening phase. Obviously they must be in sufficient force to deal with at least one German army corps, and there ought to be a sufficiently strong expedition ready to follow within a fortnight to deal with a second army corps. It may be assumed that we can, if adequate preparations are made beforehand, land 200,000 trained troops on the Continent in two successive expeditions at an interval of a fortnight or three weeks, and without national vanity we can safely reckon these as equal to 250,000 German troops. The German official estimate of 300,000 is rather more flattering to our self-esteem, but it is safer to take the lower scale, more especially as the Germans claim with the estimated numerical superiority the certainty of victory.

The military authorities are very properly reticent as to what they are ready to do, but one would like to have some tangible reason for assuming that 100,000 men* can be conveyed across the Channel in forty-eight hours. We must remember that the German naval attack will be timed to synchronise with that on France and her northern neighbours by land, and that one of its main objects will be to hinder and embarrass our sea operations of every kind.

* As a matter of fact, it took fourteen days to land 65,000 men in France.

The infliction of even slight wounds would mean delay in the sailing of our first expedition, or possibly its partial arrest, and the loss of invaluable time. If the British army got to its positions only after the French army had scored a success single-handed, it would be a humiliation; if only after a reverse, it would be a calamity that might never be retrieved. The haphazard methods of old days will never do in this age of rapid overwhelming and overlapping movements. The German advance pivoting round Verdun with a front extending to the Meuse, and perhaps even west of that river, will be at a rush, like the inundation of an ocean moved by a submarine volcanic explosion.

There is scarcely any necessity to dwell in conclusion on the fact which must be obvious to every intelligent person in both France and England, that the two countries have an equal and common interest in withstanding together the overweening pretension of Germany to be the mistress of Europe. The downfall of either of us must be the death blow in a little time to the other. France is a great military nation, England unfortunately is not, but she has all the material available to become one. England is still the first Naval Power in the world, and if the struggle will only come soon, she will remain so. But the decision of Europe's fate will not be on sea, but on land, and all our fleet can do for us is to guard our shores and hold the route open for us to send our troops to France and elsewhere, so that they may do their part in upholding the liberties of Western Europe, and in expelling the would-be robber from the two kingdoms of the Netherlands.*

The number of trained men required to make up the two expeditionary corps may not seem great when contrasted with the enormous armies of the Continent, but they represent a *corps d'élite* which would stiffen the resisting capacity of the Dutch and Belgian armies. The opinion may also be expressed with some confidence that both those

* The original German plan included the invasion of Holland by seizing the bridges over the Meuse at Venlo, Roermond, and Maastricht. It was changed because Germany thought she would gain more by respecting the neutrality of Holland. Why the Dutch Government has stood on one side, when it well knows that a victorious Germany will not show it any consideration, cannot be explained.

armies would be more likely to co-operate heartily with an English force than with a French. The moral effect, therefore, of the presence of an English army on the Continent fighting in alliance with France would be incalculable, and nations and individuals, at present unduly impressed by the formidable appearance of the German military system, would begin to see that they had neglected to take one important factor into their consideration when they concluded that the establishment of a German hegemony in Western Europe was a thing not to be averted.

But it would be a very great mistake to suppose that England's capacity to take part in a Continental war would begin and end with the first two expeditions. The martial spirit of the British races is only dormant, not dead. The colonies sent invaluable contingents to South Africa; they would do the same when the Mother Country called on them to come to Europe. Some means would be found to draft British and Indian troops to the scene, if only to aid our garrisons in Egypt, the Mediterranean and nearer home. With time given the Empire that sent a quarter of a million men to South Africa would have no difficulty in sending double that number to the Meuse and the Rhine. The only point of doubt is not what we could do eventually, but whether we could strike in quickly enough with what we have available for the first round.

We must also avoid committing the error of so many observers in the smaller States, who are in the habit of regarding the whole of the German army of four millions of men as of uniform and equal value. In that force there are, let us say, one million of the very first order of excellence, another million of the second order, and the remaining two millions are of the third and even the fourth order. If all goes well with the first two portions, the last two are good enough for the work assigned to them, because they will never be subjected to any severe test. But they are not the kind of force with which pitched battles are to be won in these days. We may say with absolute certainty that half a million Britishers, one-half regulars and the other half active men and good shots, would in conjunction with the French army and the two armies of the Netherlands, put an end to German dreams

of despoiling their neighbours for the remainder of the century.

Finally, let a word be said on the general motives behind German policy. Germany will fall upon France, not because she covets French territory, but simply because she knows that she must smash the French army before her hands will be free to concentrate all her power and resources on the task of depriving England of her naval and colonial paramountcy. She does not hate France as she hates and envies England. She would like France to be friends, and to join her in an Armada against this country, but as she knows this desire to be hopeless, she must first destroy the French army and pierce the line of the Vosges fortresses. She is ready at any moment to make the attempt, and she believes that she will succeed. Let there be no doubt as to the German view in this matter. From the head-quarter staff down to the humblest private, the conviction is absolute that, however bravely it fights, the French army will be smashed up as completely as and more quickly than it was in 1870. It is the first duty we owe to ourselves and to civilisation that this outrage shall not be perpetrated. We owe it on the highest grounds of reason and humanity, but we also owe it to ourselves from the instinct of self-preservation for the fate meted out to France one day will be that reserved for us the next. But to do our part we must be ready both on sea and land to strike in at the first onslaught.

THE GERMAN PLAN OF CAMPAIGN AGAINST FRANCE*

THE German move in Morocco has at least compelled the public to recognise the possibility of war at an early date between France and Germany. French opinion has shown immense restraint in face of the Agadir provocation, but there is a limit to the forbearance the French people will display under German bullying, and the Berlin Government, knowing this as well as we do, are satisfied that, if and when war suits their plans, they can have it by one further turn of the screw, making the position intolerable for a great and high-spirited nation.

A Franco-German war, becoming twenty-four hours after its opening a general European war, must then be recognised as a possibility of the near future. The purpose of this article is not to deal with any of the side issues or incidental contingencies, but to give a succinct account of the official German plan of campaign against France, and by so doing to contribute perhaps towards its being baffled.

The main German idea upon which the plan has been formed is that France must be seriously damaged in the first three weeks of the war, so that Germany may find herself in the position of victor in the first round before England and Russia have entered the field. It is considered that the effect of serious French defeats would be to deter England from landing troops on the Continent, and to induce Russia to conceive that she was doing all she need for her damaged ally by waging a defensive war on the Vistula. The German *mot d'ordre* on the commencement of hostilities, which are to precede the formal

* *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1911.

declaration of war, will be at all cost to get well established on French soil, and concentrate as large an army as possible behind, that is to say west of, the line of the Vosges, so as to fight a decisive battle somewhere in the neighbourhood of Reims or Chalons.

There was a time when it was thought that the chances of a direct attack on the line of the Vosges were not inconsiderable, and that weak points might be found between Belfort and Verdun. But this view is now held in only a modified degree, for it is considered that the best chance of making the frontal attack a success will be by executing a disconcerting and menacing offensive movement through the comparatively open country between Verdun and Sedan. All the French plans being based on the concentration of the national forces at Neufchâteau, behind Toul, one of the objects of the German strategists has been to seek a line of attack which would evade that base of concentration, render it inapplicable to the situation created by their strategy, and embarrass the French to devise another *in time*.

With this end in view the Germans have for the last fifteen years been making the necessary preparations to secure that broadened front for their advance which is essential for the accomplishment of their purpose, and these preparations are now practically completed. The line of the Vosges is not merely exceedingly formidable as a fortified position, but it is also exceedingly narrow. From Belfort to Verdun, the two extremities, is no more than 145 miles, and although Belfort might be turned by the violation of Swiss territory, the invading army could only operate against Lyons, which would take time, and exercise little or no influence on the first phase of the war. It is not safe to assume anything too positively in a problem which must become modified by fresh factors from time to time, but unless Austria can be induced to carry out an offensive movement through Porrentruy and the Rhone Valley, Germany will stand on the defensive in South Alsace. The recent fortification of several places near Mulhouse points to this conclusion. Austria's ability to send troops into France will entirely depend on Italy's action, and on what happens in Galicia. Yet the suspicion

cannot be suppressed that Austria would be very willing to do something else than the supplemental raid into France to prove her loyalty to her Prussian partner.

In any case, there is no necessity for any overwhelming anxiety on the part of the French authorities with regard to what may happen south of Belfort. Here, if anywhere, the opening for an offensive movement seems more favourable to France than to Germany. For our present purpose, which is limited to the consideration of what is aimed at in the first two or three weeks of the war, the southern scene of conflict need not again be referred to.

The contracted front of the Vosges is almost as serious a disadvantage to the army acting on the offensive as the formidable character of its defences. The lines of possible advance for any considerable body of troops are also further diminished by considerable stretches of impossible country. For instance, any advance between Belfort and Epinal, speaking, as we are, only of large operations, would be out of the question. There are, indeed, only four lines of advance open to the Germans in this quarter. They are from Metz to Verdun (two roads, one *viâ* Conflans, and the other *viâ* Mars la Tour), through Pont à Mousson to Commercy, through Château Salins to Nancy and Toul, and from Strasburg to Lunéville. The two last named are available for a combined attack on Toul and its system of dependent forts. The total frontage for the German advance between Verdun and Lunéville is then no more than seventy miles. In this restricted space it would be impossible for the Germans to employ more than half a million men, and in the event of any reverse or break-down in the execution of the plan of attack the Germans would find themselves exposed to heavy loss before they could get outside the range of the French fortress artillery.

Although the German authorities are set on putting the efficiency of the Vosges forts to the test, and also of experimenting with some of their new theories for the capture of fortified places, it is to the widened front that they are mainly looking as the scene of their first victories. From Lunéville to Verdun they have seventy miles of fortress, fort, and battery in front of them. From Verdun

to Givet there are seventy-five miles of undefended country. Longwy and Montmédy do not count as fortresses. Givet-Charlemont and Mezières, both on the Meuse, are more up to date, but from Verdun to Mezières stretches open country with a frontage of fifty miles. This is Germany's objective.

When the French drew the line of the Vosges fortification at Verdun it was assumed that the undefended gap south of the frontiers of Belgium and the Grand Duchy was too narrow to admit of any considerable German advance from Thionville, and that if it were undertaken a favourable opportunity would offer for their assuming the offensive under promising conditions. It is not quite evident why the French authorities did so, but they seem to have assumed that Germany would respect Belgian neutrality. The German text-books of twenty years ago encouraged this view by representing that Germany gained by Belgian neutrality. These passages have long been eliminated. They were made ridiculous by the elaborate preparations for taking the offensive through neutral territory from Dalheim to Treves.

Even if we leave out of account the strip flanked by Dutch territory, Germany acquired a new frontage for the outpouring of the enormous forces that will be employed in the next war of 100 miles from Thionville to Aix la Chapelle. By a converging movement, leaving the Meuse on the right hand, that would gain seventy miles of practically undefended country on the north-east frontier of France. The roads intervening between German and French territory are excellent. There are several useful lines of railway joining the main Brussels-Metz line at Marloie, Libramont, Arlon, and Luxemburg. Even if we exclude Namur, the Germans gain six direct roads to the French frontier. They have the Ourthe valley route to Marche-Rochefort and to Marche-Ciney, both good for Dinant, Beauraing and Givet; the Viel Salm, La Roche and St. Hubert for Bouillon and Sedan; the Stavelot, Bastogne, and Libramont road for Bouillon and Carignan; the St. Vith-Gouvy for the same destination; the Diekirch-Arlon-Virton for Montmédy; and the Treves-Luxemburg road for Longwy. By the longest of the roads German

territory is only seventy miles from French; by the shortest, Treves to Longwy, it is only thirty miles.

Having conceived the plan, the German authorities did not tarry in making the preparations behind their own frontier to render it capable of execution. For the last seven years Germany has been entirely engaged in providing frontier railways flanking the projected front, and in linking them up with the two bases on the middle Rhine at Coblenz and Cologne. In addition to the railways, double lined and metalled for heavy traffic, sidings have been provided at all the stations, and at suitable points between them. Between Montjoie and St. Vith landing spaces sufficient for over 120,000 men have been provided, and it is confidently asserted that that force could be thrown across the Belgian frontier between Francorchamps and Gouvy in a single night without the Belgians knowing what was coming, the troops to be employed being entrained at Coblenz, Cologne, Bonn, and Gladbach. There is not the smallest reason for hoping that this dispatch of the advance force of the invaders would miscarry. If the whole *corps d'armées* were not over the border in the twenty-four hours, at least a sufficient part would be over to make sure of the possession of Libramont in half that time. It is declared that the four cavalry regiments and four horse artillery batteries at Elsenborn camp during six months of the year could be at Libramont within six hours of leaving their base.

Under the present system, perhaps under any, there is no possibility of the Belgians doing anything to arrest or even delay this movement. General Hellebaut, the Belgian Minister of War, made what is called a reassuring statement in the Brussels Chamber a little time ago. He referred to the official arrangements made for blowing up bridges on the railways, and otherwise rendering them useless. With regard to the destruction of the railways in Belgium, it must first of all be stated that for the initial rush Germany would not use them. With Stavelot and Trois Ponts in the hands of the German cavalry, can the Belgian military authorities feel confident that the bridge over the Amblève would be destroyed? But even if it were destroyed it would not delay the German advance, which,

so far as Belgian soil is concerned, is to be made by the roads and not by rail. Belgian railways would only come into use for the purposes of supply and reinforcements. Even if the Belgian arrangements for placing the lines out of use worked to perfection, the German advance would not be retarded, and the German railway corps could repair the damage done to the line in a comparatively short space of time. To talk of delaying the German advance by blowing up a few bridges between Stavelot and Gouvy may be compared to trying to stop a cannon-ball with an open umbrella.

General Hellebaut's admission as to the improved armament of Liège has supplied a reason for the taking in hand of the latest of Germany's strategic railways on the Belgian frontier. A miserable little line, nine miles in all, has hitherto served all the requirements of Eupen. This loop line commences at Herbesthal on the main line from Liège to Aix la Chapelle, &c., passes through Eupen and then links on with the Aix-St. Vith line at Raeren. It is now in course of being converted into a double-railed line capable of supporting heavy traffic. In a vague sort of way it was felt that there must be some project behind this, but beyond the general principle of broadening the front as much as possible no definite importance was attached to it. It seems now pretty clear that the design is to seize the Baraque de Michel, the highest plateau in Belgium.

The practical point, which is for the moment all that need be considered, is that the Belgian measures described by the War Minister of that country would not deter or delay the German advance on Libramont, which may be regarded as their first strategical objective. In violating Belgian neutrality Germany would endeavour to convince the Belgian Government and people that she was not animated by any hostile spirit towards them, and there have been some indications that she flattered herself that her persuasive utterances would be accepted. General Hellebaut's statement must then have administered a considerable shock to the German strategists, who have regarded Belgium as a *quantité négligeable*. The fortified position of Liège, well held, with its lines of communica-

tion open to Namur and Antwerp, is a very awkward fact for the invader sweeping across the Ardennes for France. It would not perhaps count for a great deal if all went well at the front, but a retreating German army would be a very favourable mark for the resentment aroused in Belgium by the unprovoked invasion of that country.

Decidedly the existence of Liège is a material fact in regard to the advance across the Ardennes, which the German strategists must include in their calculations. They will not, even for that consideration, defer the dash on Libramont, but it will be coupled with a polite but firm request to the Belgians delivered by another army corps from that hastening to the Semois to allow the Germans to take care of the Liège forts for them. What will be the Belgian reply to that? What are the effective arrangements in the forts themselves to support the reply with deeds? It will not be such a simple task as blowing up the bridges at Trois Ponts. At least we must assume that the guns at Chaudfontaine and Embourg will have other work to do for a long time than to enfilade the road from Malmédy to Stavelot.

The Germans are prepared to supplement the advance through the Belgian Ardennes with a movement encompassing the six forts of Liège on the right bank of the Meuse. Some of those forts are very strong, others are not so strong, but what is not certain is whether the position would become untenable if Boncelles or Evegnée were captured or demolished. If, however, the Belgians display the moral fortitude to hold out at Liège despite the imposing demonstration that the Germans intend making against it, they ought to be able to maintain their ground until aid reached them from both France and England. Even if they could not accomplish so much, the arrest of the Germans at Liège for a few weeks would secure the time needed to organise a formidable interior place of stand reposing on the fortified position of Namur. On the other hand, if by lack of patriotic devotion or through moral degeneracy Liège succumbs to the Germans at their first summons, Namur, which is a far weaker position than Liège, could not be converted in time into an adequate base for national defence. Besides, the loss of Liège

would compromise the whole Belgian position outside Antwerp, which is a place entirely for defensive and not offensive action.

The completeness of the success of Germany's attack on the north-east frontier of France would depend therefore on the fate of Liège. If it passed into her hands in the first few days of the war German strategists would have no anxiety about their right flank, and would press on on the broad front from Givet to Thionville. We have dwelt more especially on the rôle of the troops marching across the Belgian Ardennes, one entire army in the first place to be increased to two armies as soon as the fate of Liège was decided. This would be the right wing of the army of invasion. But the left wing, moving through Treves, Luxemburg, and Thionville, would be even more formidable. Its objective would be Stenay and Vouziers. The taking up of a strong position on the Aisne by the two hosts moving through Belgium and the Grand Duchy would represent the successful achievement of the first stage in the German plan of campaign against France.

It is not easy to see how a German success up to that point can be prevented, and it is to be hoped that France in a vain attempt to hinder what is practically inevitable may not squander her magnificent cavalry, which, if preserved intact, might in the second phase of the struggle turn the scale in her favour. To obtain her primary objectives, Germany is prepared to waste a large number of men. The cost of men will not prevent her straining every effort to attain her ends. If the French pour over into Belgium to meet her half-way, they will be playing her game and equalising the chances of loss. An obstinate defence without risking too much in any pitched action north of the Reims-Laon-La Fère line is clearly the best French strategy. Time would thus be gained for England to play her part, and the further German troops have got south of the Semois the better our chance of striking at their rear. It will not be a bad thing for France's chances of final victory if the first great battle of the war can be deferred until the Germans are in the Aisne Valley. It will take the Germans much longer to get there than the three weeks we shall require to come into action, and it is not

difficult to conceive a situation in which the Germans might find themselves very uncomfortable.

On the other hand, there is a risk that the French generals will not relish the idea of giving ground, and that they will strain every effort to meet the Germans before they have got off Belgian territory. This will be to fight the Germans' battle, and to risk giving the colour to the whole war by an initial blunder due to military pride. They should make allowance for the conditions under which their allies can alone come to their help. Both England and Russia must be slow from different circumstances. Therefore France must be patient and give ground. Catinat is the general they should take as their model, and *reculer pour mieux sauter* should be their motto. The only way to baffle the German plan of campaign is to leave the development of its inherent difficulties to time and distance. The Germans will be far less formidable at Rethel or Vouziers, if no battles have been lost by the French before they arrive there, than they would be at, let us say, Libramont or even Sedan. It will no doubt be disagreeable to French sentiment to see the first battles of the war occur on French soil, but victories there would be better than defeats further north.

No one can predict with absolute confidence the line that the Belgian Government will take on the outbreak of hostilities. The defence or non-defence of Liège is only part of the question. If it is defended, that signifies that Belgium will take her place side by side with England and France. If it is not defended it will still leave her real policy open to doubt, for the Germans, on getting possession of Liège or even of some of the eastern and southern forts, would leave her studiously alone and refrain from doing anything to irritate Belgian opinion. The test of the intentions of the Belgian Government would be the degree of promptitude with which it summoned England to perform her treaty obligations in defending Belgium. But that step would be just as much an act of hostility to Germany as the defence of Liège would be, and therefore the inference seems clear that if Liège is not defended the Belgian Government would not be very energetic in calling

upon England for aid. The German authorities seem strangely confident that in the first stage of the war they will not have much trouble from the Belgians, and that if they only succeed in the campaign they will have none at all.

I have carefully refrained from saying anything on the subject of what this country could and would do when the Germans violate Belgian territory. It is a case in which it is better not to give the smallest indication of what one conceives to be possible; but at least it may be said that there is no reason for thinking that we should not be able to perform a useful part in conjunction with our allies. There is another point, however, on which it is permissible to express a decided opinion. Whatever the opinion of the existing Government in Belgium may be about the two neighbours, the opinion of the great mass of the Belgian people, Fleming as well as Walloon, is entirely in sympathy with France. There is a German tendency in the commercial circles of Antwerp, which is already half a German city, and there is a sort of feeling in bureaucratic circles that Germany would prove a good and possibly an inevitable protector; but the mass of the nation dislikes the Germans, as they will discover when they come into the thickly peopled parts of the country. Of course, this sentiment will not count for much in the Ardennes, which is thinly populated, and where the German legions will far outnumber the inhabitants. But it is a force that will have to be reckoned with sooner or later by the Belgian Government as well as the Germans.

With regard to the German plan of campaign as a whole, there is nothing to be done except to be prepared in good time with measures suitable, not to foil it in the first stage, for that is impossible and will only invite disaster, but to baffle it in the second stage, when English co-operation has become possible. Belgian complaisance to Germany, even if it is displayed, will not for a very long time go so far as admitting her troops into Antwerp, and so long as that gate remains open there is no elimination of the factor of English participation in the defence of Belgium from the

calculations of German strategists. They are counting on prompt successes, to be gained partly by the suddenness of their attack and partly by the other side playing their game, to prevent the weak points of their plan from being discovered, and to remove the risks that attach to it in common with all other operations of war.

ENGLAND AND LITTLE STATES*

AT the commencement of the war in South Africa a Belgian man of letters whose ability I admire—although I deplore the prejudice which led him, in common with so many of his countrymen, astray as to the justice of that war—said to me: “The little States of Europe will never trust England again!” Eighteen months later a high Dutch official used very similar words to the effect that “the small Powers had lost faith in England!” In both cases I asked the question whether the *gamin* who pelted one with mud should not receive castigation, and, if he proved so obstinate and refractory as to deserve it by biting and kicking, whether it were not legitimate to stun and render him helpless of further mischief even although, in comparison of size, the difference might be as marked as between the British Empire and the late South African Republics. At the time it appeared somewhat unappreciative and ungrateful for the past in a Belgian and a Dutchman to summarily depose England from the proud position she had gained as the protector of the weak during generations and even centuries, because, under provocation that they did not take the trouble to consider and understand, she had resorted to measures of legitimate defence against a small but unreasonable opponent. The recent perusal of some secret chapters of diplomatic history has strengthened this feeling, and perhaps a reconsideration by their light of what England has done in the past for the little States may restore the confidence of at least Belgium and Holland in her, and suggest to the most violent pro-Boers of Brussels and Amsterdam that their countries may have further need of her protection and support.

The retrospect may be limited to forty years, but it is

* *The Nineteenth Century and After*, June, 1902.

impossible to forget that our restitution of Java to the Dutch in 1816 was not merely one of the most disinterested acts in history, but that it bestowed on Holland the chief if not the sole source of her national prosperity and power, for "without Java" more than one popular Dutch writer has declared that "Holland would be dead."

The Danish war opened the flood-gates of ambition on the Continent and commenced the Bismarckian era. The war with Austria brought France and Prussia face to face, and, both States hesitating to appeal to the sword, a period of the gravest peril set in for the group of little States between Alsace and the North Sea. Who proved their most, it might even be said their only, disinterested champion then but England? This was the more remarkable because it was a period with us of frequent changes of Ministry, and of the dearth of capable foreign Ministers that followed the death of Lord Palmerston. If England had not thrown her ægis over Belgium, Luxemburg and Holland, no one can doubt that Bismarck and Napoleon would have sealed a truce at their expense. The cannon of Sadowa had scarcely ceased to sound when France proposed to indemnify herself for Prussia's triumph by reclaiming the frontier of 1814. What did that mean? It meant taking Charleroi and Philippeville from Belgium, although France was a guarantor of her integrity. It was subsequently explained that this would entail no sacrifice by Belgium, but it was never made clear by the Imperial Ministers whether they meant by this that Belgium was virtually part of France, with common commercial and political interests, or that she should receive compensation for the loss of Charleroi, &c., in Luxemburg. There will always be much difficulty, unless the Empress Eugénie throws light on the subject in her memoirs, in getting at the true history of this period, because the Emperor Napoleon gave his instructions verbally and Prince Bismarck cynically observed that it was not for him "to reveal the secrets of France." When he did speak years later he probably said rather what he wished to be believed than told all that really happened.

While France aimed at compensating herself in Belgium, Prussia turned her glances in the direction of Holland.

The language of Bismarck became menacing, the "reptile press," then coming into existence under his auspices, began to demand a rectification of the frontier with the Netherlands. The Dutch papers replied in valiant style, and the Dutch Government, alarmed at the prospect, turned to England for sympathy and support. The Belgian public were also frightened by the possible extension of Prussian power on their north-eastern frontier, and their journals declared that Prussia's acquisition of Limburg would be a serious menace to their independence. When the Dutch Minister at Berlin sounded Prince Bismarck as to Prussia's intention towards his country he received satisfactory assurances; but he found him very wrath with the Belgians, and Bismarck declared, with a threatening gesture, that "*La Belgique pourrait le payer cher.*" There is no doubt at that moment (January-February 1867) Bismarck would have raised no objection to Napoleon's taking Charleroi and Philippeville, provided that would have satisfied the Emperor. But the Emperor wanted more, and in another direction.

Notwithstanding the satisfactory assurances mentioned, Dutch suspicions and fears were not allayed. The Dutch Chambers held a secret session, and it was probably on this occasion that the idea of a closer union with England was first mooted. The apprehension felt on the side of Prussia naturally turned the minds of the Dutch people and Government also towards conciliating France, and, as it was well known that Napoleon wanted Luxemburg, the King of the Netherlands notified his readiness to sell it. This was in March 1867, but it is necessary to remember that in the previous year, while the Treaty of Prague was being negotiated, Bismarck had dangled the possession of Luxemburg as a bait before Napoleon, who with fatal indecision had neglected to seize it at a moment when Prussia could and would not have opposed the step. The Dutch Government proposed then to secure French support by making the ownership of Luxemburg a business transaction for a certain number of million thalers. The policy of the Emperor at this moment was defined in the following terms: "After alluding to the feeling of irritation towards Prussia which had been felt by the French people at the

results of the late war, the French Minister stated that communications had been addressed both to Prussia and Holland pointing out that Prussia could no longer be permitted to retain possession of the Fortress of Luxemburg, and that France could not look upon the Duchy of Luxemburg as German, inasmuch as the inhabitants had always been Frenchmen in the eyes of France." It is important to note that the British Government, fully informed as to the Dutch proposal and its motives, expressed its intention to throw no impediment in the way of this arrangement. When three of the Powers were practically agreed as to the transfer of Luxemburg to France, Prussia began to raise difficulties and to affirm that German opinion would not allow her to abandon the Duchy. The reference to German opinion was a sort of preliminary to the publication a few weeks later of the Treaties of Alliance with the Southern States of Germany.

Bismarck, having made his position surer in Germany, prepared to break faith with France. While in the throes of the struggle with Austria he was willing to keep her quiet by allowing her to appropriate Belgian territory and Luxemburg, promising to repay himself at the expense of Holland in Limburg or elsewhere. But Napoleon, with more conscience than his opponent, missed his opportunity, and when he proposed with the general assent to purchase some of the territory that he had been invited to appropriate Prussia threw aside the mask and opposed the transaction. Prussian diplomacy then sought to attain its object through the simpleness of England, and we were invited to dissuade King William the Third of the Netherlands from his plan of selling Luxemburg, which we had already substantially approved. At the same time Prussia gave fresh and more positive assurances at The Hague, where apprehension about Limburg was for the moment allayed. The consequence of these changes was that France and Prussia were brought face to face and peace hung by a thread. However, the good offices of England were brought into play, a Conference to settle the Luxemburg question was agreed upon, and the Treaty of London of the 11th of May 1867 arranged that the German troops were to be withdrawn from Luxemburg, the fortress dismantled,

and the Duchy formed into a neutral State guaranteed by the Powers.

The secret diplomacy of the years 1866 and 1867 is not exhausted by the later proposals of January 1867 to indemnify France in Belgium and Luxemburg. They had been preceded by a far more audacious project, formulated before the Seven Weeks' War, for a French annexation of Belgium. The full history of this scheme exists among the archives of the Brussels Foreign Department, and will some day be given to the world. In it the Belgians were treated as mere chattels, the guarantee of the Powers was dismissed as a figment of the imagination, and France was to add the nine South Netherland provinces to her empire. Bismarck declared that "a guarantee was in these days of little or no value," and he considered that neither England nor Russia would intervene to save Belgium. Bismarck supported these views by confident assertions about the assumed indisposition of the Queen's Government to take part in what he called the affairs of the day. But Napoleon, more timid and decidedly averse to any quarrel with England, made inquiries and sounded the British Government as to its views about Belgium. The reply he received was not encouraging. The guarantee that Bismarck laughed away in Berlin was regarded in Downing Street as a solemn pledge which it would be our duty to redeem. A suggestion to propitiate us by either making Antwerp a free port or attaching it to Holland failed to produce any modification of our policy and was turned aside with chilling disdain. It was thus made clear to the Emperor that to attempt to take Belgium as a solatium for Prussia's success in Germany was to offend England, and to give Prussia a powerful ally whenever the inevitable struggle between the two military Powers occurred.

Before the Luxemburg question had been definitely settled, apprehension again broke out in Holland at Prussia's designs on her independence. The most alarming reports were in circulation. The Dutch Minister in Vienna told Lord Bloomfield that he was alarmed for the independence and future safety of his country. It was said that Bismarck had prepared an ultimatum calling on

Holland at brief delay to enter the North German Confederation. At that moment Bismarck had been making speeches of Prussia's need of ports and colonies if she were to become a great maritime nation, and it was argued by his agents that the simplest way to accomplish this was by appropriating those of a weak neighbour. Holland, having failed in the project of propitiating France by the sale of Luxemburg, turned more and more towards England as the most likely champion against Prussia. This was the more necessary as by a fresh shuffling of the political cards France seemed willing to leave Holland to Prussia while she turned her attention to Belgium and sought to strengthen her position in that State by a customs union, and the amalgamation of the Belgian-Luxemburg line with her own Eastern Railway.

The consequence of Prussian designs on Holland was that informal and secret negotiations were begun between some prominent members of the Government and the King of the Netherlands for a definite union between Holland and Great Britain. These negotiations were known to a very limited number of persons in both countries, and were not conducted through the regular channels. But none the less they were carried on by Ministers who, if the affair had reached consummation, possessed the power to give effect to their decisions, while on his side King William was cognisant of and a party to the discussion. At that time Holland was threatened, not only by a foreign invasion, but by the extinction of the Orange family. King William had no apparent thoughts of marrying again. His sons were dead or dying. There seemed no objection to Holland escaping forcible union with the German Confederation by voluntary union with the British Empire. It might have the opposite result to what occurred in the seventeenth century—viz. that instead of our having a Dutch king the Dutch would have got an English sovereign—but this did not appear very dreadful provided adequate safeguards were found for Dutch liberty, laws and internal independence. I am informed that one of the details discussed was the question of Dutch delegates or representatives in the Imperial Parliament, and that the negotiations or discussion broke down on this very point.

The fact that is interesting about this very secret chapter of history is that at that time the Dutch, or rather their king, the father of Queen Wilhelmina, saw no objection to a union with England. And why had he no objection? Because he knew that, while France and Prussia were engaged together or separately in unscrupulous designs on the small States of Belgic Gaul, England not only had none, but was strenuously endeavouring to preserve them from destruction and disappearance from the map. This contemplated union of Great Britain and the Netherlands was not as surprising as it may appear now in the light of pro-Boer ferment in Holland, for the policy of the Orange family under the three Williams had been strongly philo-British, and it was not the fault of the first king or his son that the Princess Charlotte, instead of marrying Prince Leopold, did not become heiress to the throne of the Netherlands as well as of England.

It is matter for permanent regret that these informal and personal negotiations did not reach a more advanced stage, so that they might have been put formally on record. Their precise course, as well as the exact cause of their failure, remains more or less buried in mystery. They may have broken down on some practical detail as to how the arrangement was to work, or, as seems more probable, there may have been a want of courage and confidence in clinching the arrangement. Be the explanation of the failure what it may, the mere contemplation of such a union afforded the strongest possible evidence of community of interest and international trust. From an historical point of view the project of King William the Third of the Netherlands recalls that of the Prince of Orange to seek a new home if the flooding of the country in 1670 had failed to expel the French invaders. As nothing has occurred since to diminish England's claim to be considered a protecting and not an aggressive Power, there is no valid reason to-day for the Dutch public to regard the British alliance with different eyes from those of the Dutch king thirty-five years ago. Perhaps when the passions of the hour are allayed judicious and gratifying sentiments will revive.

They have a sound foundation in the incontestable fact

that England has no schemes of territorial aggrandisement at the expense of her neighbours. In a patriotic Dutchman's eyes this must in the long run count for much, and reason will prevail over temporary passion and prejudice. The threats of Germany in 1866-7 have been revived on several occasions since, and they are only dormant now. In 1874 it was the action of German diplomacy, assisted by the Chauvinism of the Dutch military party, that prevented the Dutch Government accepting our mediation in the quarrel with Acheen which has cost Holland immense sacrifices during the last thirty years. It was in connection with that event that Bismarck made the very characteristic confession that "he wanted Holland to bleed to death." In 1885 there was a still more critical phase in Germany's treatment of the Holland question, and perhaps the secret history of that episode contains some surprises, but in the Far East it led Governor Loudon, of the Dutch Indies, to declare that when the Black Eagle went up at The Hague the Union Jack should be hoisted at Batavia. For some years past German policy has been modified in its expression if not its aim, and pleasant words have been substituted for threats. The marriage of the young Queen with a German Prince was thought to be a great triumph, and Holland was already classed with Saxony and Bavaria. Twelve months have damped those hopes. The German marriage has not been a success in diminishing the patriotism of the Hollanders. On the contrary, they regard their dear cousins with more dislike, aversion, and fear than before the arrival of Prince Heinrich.

If we turn to Belgium, with regard to which Great Britain has accepted definite responsibilities, the only definite responsibilities she has yet accepted towards any European State, we find that they have been discharged with unflinching spirit. The Belgian people, if we may trust the speeches in their Chamber and the articles in their press, do not seem to be aware of this fact. In 1866, when Bismarck was tempting Napoleon to occupy Belgium, British diplomacy asserted itself at Paris and made the Emperor realise that he could only carry out his scheme by offending England at once and bringing her into the lists later on. In 1867, when the proposal to incorporate

Luxemburg with Belgium was mooted as a solution of the difficulty, England was not unfavourable to the step, which might have been carried out but for the hesitation of the Belgian Government itself, arising perhaps from some private threat from Prussia.

The most signal service that England ever rendered Belgium, and the clearest evidence given as to her intentions to fulfil her promises, were, however, afforded during the Franco-German War. On the 17th of July 1870 the two belligerents voluntarily announced their intention to respect the neutrality of Luxemburg. No corresponding declaration was made on the subject of Belgium, and various alarming reports were afloat as to the possibility of its becoming a field of military operations. Under these circumstances it was necessary for the guarantors of Belgium's neutrality and integrity to speak out and not only to speak but to act. Two of those guarantors were at war, Russia and Austria said and did nothing, England, the fifth of them, spoke and acted alone. What did she do?

She notified the Governments of France and Prussia that she expected them to observe the conditions to which they had subscribed when the kingdom of Belgium was created. It soon became clear that this was not enough to remove all prospect of danger. England, accordingly, entered into direct negotiations with each of the belligerent Powers, and the result was the signature of two separate treaties for the protection of Belgium. By the first, signed in London on the 9th of August 1870, England agreed to join Prussia in the event of France violating the neutrality of Belgium. By the second, dated London the 11th of August 1870, England bound herself to join France in the event of Prussia violating the neutrality of Belgium. Both these treaties were to remain binding during the progress of the Franco-Prussian War and for twelve months after the exchange of the ratification of any treaty of peace between the combatants.

That was how England fulfilled her obligations towards Belgium in the hour of peril, and there can be no doubt in anybody's mind that, so long as we do not publicly repudiate the guarantee we accepted seventy years ago

for Belgium's neutrality as "an independent kingdom," we shall be as ready in the future as in the past to fulfil them. It may do some good in the present mood of the Belgian public to recall the simple fact that of the five Powers which guaranteed the separate existence of Belgium under conditions exceptionally favourable for her material prosperity, England is the only one which has ever given any tangible proof of her willingness and readiness to protect her. Her two neighbours can be convicted of having formed plans on several occasions to despoil and destroy her in profound indifference to their own word or her interests.

Formerly Belgian statesmen leant so entirely on English protection that they did nothing for the defence of their country and neglected their most obvious duties. A neutral State has its duties to perform while war is being carried on round its borders, and it must have the means of discharging them efficiently. A protected State must be ready to do its utmost to assist and co-operate with those who consent to protect it. The military arrangements of Belgium have lagged behind the requirements of her position, and projects of army reform have given little or no result. The divisions of parties are so acute that patriotism has become obscured, and the responsible rulers may be trusting for security to the execution of insurance treaties, similar to those signed by England in 1870, rather than to national efforts and timely preparation. An insurance treaty with an interested Power is, however, a very different agreement from the corresponding arrangement concluded by an absolutely disinterested Power, such as England was and still is with regard to Belgium. The old fable of the animals who went a-hunting with the lion illustrates the disappointments that await the weak when they associate themselves with the strong and the unscrupulous.

Of late years there has been an increasing tendency in Belgium to represent that, if certain military reforms were executed, the country could dispense with any external guarantee and hold its own in the family of nations. If this argument were only employed as an electioneering device, or with the object of stimulating sluggish opinion

on the military situation, there would be no reason to take serious notice of it. But there is unfortunately little doubt that a large number of Belgians hold this view in all sincerity, and the conclusion to which this conviction has led them is that the protection of England in particular may be dispensed with. Sentiment on this subject has been crystallised in the two following sentences. A Belgian philosopher has said that "there are no little States, only little minds"; and a Belgian General of wide reputation has written not only that she should, but that "Belgium can rely on her own strength if properly utilised, and dispense with the support of England." The former was probably lost in the mists of philosophy, the latter was no doubt thinking of one or other of the possible insurance treaties to which reference has been made. It is, of course, a question for the Belgians to decide mainly for themselves, but in making their calculations they should remember that they will have to share the fate of the Power with which they associate themselves as an ally, and that they will have to commit themselves to a departure from the secure haven of guaranteed neutrality before they have any sure means of knowing to which side victory will incline. There is also no doubt that the war in South Africa and the long resistance offered by the Boers have unduly increased the confidence of nations in citizen armies. The real explanation of that long resistance is ignored. The result is set down to the skill, courage, and determination of the Boers, whereas no one can doubt who has really studied the question that the main causes of the prolongation of the war have been the extraordinary difficulties of the country, its vast extent, and the absence of roads and railways throughout its greater portion. It is no disparagement of Belgian native courage to say that Belgium is traversed by admirable roads and railways, that it has no natural defences, and that its artificial defences are limited to two fortified positions as *têtes de pont* at Namur and Liège and one fortress, in a very imperfect condition, at Antwerp. The most self-confident Belgian would be wise to reconsider the position of his country by the light of all the circumstances, and, instead of disparaging the value of the English alliance, the Belgian people should seek to

supplement and augment it by home preparations. When the need arises the production of an insurance treaty, making an ally of the neighbour that committed no act of aggression, might then prove a master stroke of policy.

Something may have been achieved towards accomplishing this result if those in authority in Belgium will impress on their people the fact that England is the only guaranteeing Power that ever did anything tangible in the sense of fulfilling its word towards them. It is proper to recall the fact that this was done by Mr. Gladstone at a moment when, to employ Prince Bismarck's sarcastic language, it was thought that we did not trouble ourselves with such matters. It was indeed a period of self-effacement, but at the moment of our extremest indifference to Imperial responsibilities we were still not willing to depart from our plighted word. If Mr. Gladstone went to the length of signing treaties in 1870 binding this country to go to war with States with which we had no other ground for quarrel than the desire to protect Belgium, none of our Continental critics can doubt that, with a stronger Government and an awakened public interest in foreign questions, we would do as much and more if to-morrow we were called upon to redeem our pledge. This is true so long as we hold ourselves bound by the London Convention of 1831.

It is necessary to make this final reservation because our political horizon has been enlarged of late years, and the further ends of the world have been drawn into the current of our affairs. Some day or other this may produce as a consequence the wish to modify our old standing obligations by withdrawing from guarantees and promises that are only embarrassing and do not provide us with an adequate return. It will be very regrettable for old association's sake if a commencement in the way of curtailment should be made with Belgium, but the loose talk of Belgian authorities, literary and military, has done more harm to the good feeling formerly prevailing here than is credited in Brussels. The past policy of England towards little States might be described as guided by a genuine desire to protect them. There is no denying that this desire has

been somewhat cooled of late by a want of appreciation in the protected and by the eagerness shown to disparage the policy and power of England. We forgive easily, but it is not so easy to forget, and it might be disastrous for some of our clients if we remembered everything that they have said of us during the struggle in South Africa when they are confronted with a crisis of their own.

A POSSIBLE ADDITION TO THE DUAL ALLIANCE*

ALL the Governments of Europe, it may be assumed, are bent on the maintenance of peace, and their efforts are mainly directed towards the creation of fresh alliances and understandings among themselves which will conduce to that end. When the process of dividing the States, great and little, of Europe into clearly defined groups bound to one another by distinct political and military engagements has been brought to completion, then the basis of a general peace may have been discovered. But at present we are very far from this condition of things, which would be termed happy if it produced the desired result. Of the nineteen European States that possess some degree of military power, only six have entered into any mutually binding engagement. These six are the members of the Triple Alliance, plus Roumania, and of the Dual Alliance. In addition to those two arrangements for common defensive purposes there are the guarantees by the Great Powers on behalf of Belgium and of Luxemburg. England is a party to those guarantees, and beyond them she has no Continental engagement. The remaining twelve States have no external obligations whatever.

Notwithstanding the general desire for peace, anxiety is rarely absent from the council chamber in the capitals of Europe. On the one hand, alliances which are incomplete because not comprehensive of even the Great Powers (for England stands aloof), carry within themselves the germs of decay and disintegration; on the other there remains the uncertainty to which group the States outside the existing federations will attach themselves. The

* *The Nineteenth Century and After*, December, 1902.

factors of the problem, if not constantly changing, are still variant in value, and its solution may be found in the introduction of new elements just as likely as by the competition and collision of the old. While the attraction of some of the outside States to one or other of the chief groups that divide Europe has become a main consideration at Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, opinion in those States themselves has also for some years past been moving in a direction favourable to the consummation of such an arrangement. It has gone a certain way towards meeting the wishes of those statesmen who believe that the balance of power, and with it the future of Europe, will be determined by the most skilfully formed and powerful combination. What that combination will be is still obscure. In two countries of Europe, however, the process of evolution seems likely to produce definite results and a final decision before very long. These two countries are Holland and Belgium, small States as they are often termed, but important by reason of their history, the intelligence and enterprise of their inhabitants, and the high degree of prosperity which they have attained. There is, moreover, enough affinity and resemblance between the two peoples to amply justify the description given me by a distinguished Dutch officer, "one State with two Sovereigns," and the phrase aptly illustrates an opinion that has been spreading during the last ten years among the *élite* in the two countries that their interests and policy should be regarded as identical.

This opinion, which was general enough in the Cabinet and at the mess-table, has spread much further through the ranks of the people during the last three years, and under skilful direction might acquire all the force of a unanimous national sentiment. The war in South Africa has undoubtedly given it an enormous impetus. The Dutch and the Belgians saw in the Transvaal a small State attacked by a Great Power. They have applied the illustration to their own position. While they have been encouraged by the evidence afforded as to the advantages possessed by those who remain on the defensive under the conditions of modern warfare, and led to form therefrom an optimistic opinion as to what little States may accomplish in defence of their independence, they have also

realised that union is necessary for self-preservation, and this may eventually result in the practical reunion of the Seventeen Provinces which has been a dream for over three centuries.

If the question were entirely confined to the Dutch and the Belgians, their gravitation towards one another would be a matter with which the rest of Europe would not greatly concern itself. It would be effected with the deliberation that is more or less characteristic of the two peoples, and Europe would arrange its own affairs in complete indifference to the topics agitating opinion at The Hague and Brussels. But the promoters of a Belgian-Dutch accord have seen in recent events ground for accelerating their movements and enlarging their programme. Little States may offer an obstinate defence, but in the end they succumb. It is not every little State that has at its disposal the resources for war of the late South African Republics, nor their natural defences as well. In these days of torpedo-boats and light-draught warships the Dutch may reasonably doubt whether their dykes would answer as well as in the time of William of Orange. Belgium is practically an open country outside Antwerp. The Ardennes, traversed by splendid roads, would offer no place of refuge for distressed freedom even if Belgian patriotism went to the length of heroically seeking their shelter. Opinion is not so prejudiced across the Channel by admiration for the Boers as to blind the Dutch and Belgians to the fact that they do not possess the natural advantages that made the defenders of the veldt so formidable. For this reason the advisability, the necessity even, of attaching themselves to some Great Power or group of Great Powers has forced itself upon the conviction of the two peoples concerned, and it only remains for circumstances to mould this persuasion into the definite form required for the conclusion of an alliance.

There are obvious reasons why this process should prove more rapid in Holland than in Belgium. Holland is an entirely independent and uncontrolled country that must trust in the main to her own efforts. She can make treaties as she deems necessary without consulting any one. If she likes to declare war, no one can say that she is breaking

any understanding and thereby increasing the responsibility of those who have contracted obligations on her behalf. Holland is free to do what she likes, subject to the inseparable condition that the Dutch people accept the consequences.

But it is otherwise with Belgium. She is not free to act as Holland can. She is not less an independent country, but she is guaranteed and bound to neutrality. A neutral State cannot conclude an alliance without destroying the very basis of its own existence. There is the following additional consideration for the Belgians before deciding to rend the bands which bind them. The extraordinary prosperity of their country has been gained as a neutral State, and for nearly seventy years not a shot has been fired—at least by a foreign soldier—in what was “the cockpit of Europe.” Many Belgians may naturally think that this prosperity and peace are due to the fact that their country has been neutral and protected by an international guarantee. Would those advantages depart if there were no longer neutrality and the guarantee of the Powers? Of course no positive assurance can be given on that point, but these considerations at least explain why so many Belgians are reluctant to quit the secure haven in which they have so long lived happily and with waxing prosperity. Only the apprehension that the haven may become a trap will bring round the mass of the Belgians to the view that the independence of their country should be free and uncontrolled by the limitations imposed by a guarantee. Belgian opinion is divided on most subjects; it is only in an hour of extreme peril that it is likely to attain unanimity on this.

At the same time two things are becoming every day clearer. In the first place a nation of the numbers, wealth, resources, and ambition of the Belgians ought not to need any guarantee. They should work out their own destiny in conjunction with their natural allies the Dutch, and in co-operation with the friends and associates that the perils of the hour may bring them. In the second place the guarantors of Belgium in 1831 may at any moment think that the term of their guarantee has been reached. The condition of Europe now is totally different from what

it was then. Belgium herself has changed, and with the same military organisation as her neighbours should be well able to take care of herself. Moreover there is not a shred of evidence to show that the guarantee of the Five Powers possessed any meaning or value except for England. Russia was too far off, Austria too indifferent, while France and Prussia repeatedly played games of perilous political intrigue with each other, the counters being Belgian independence. An international guarantee that is demonstrably not sincerely adhered to by all the guarantors is deceptive and dangerous. Either it possesses no meaning, or it must place the one faithful trustee in a false and humiliating position. It is even conceivable that England might find herself committed through the defection of her co-guarantors to a course that would ally her with the very Power or Powers from whom she herself would ultimately have the most to dread. The guarantee of Belgium by this country as one of the Powers is more or less of an anachronism. It would be far better to substitute for it a definite Anglo-Belgian treaty which would give both countries some assurance as to what they would do in a crisis for mutual support. For that Belgian opinion also might manifest greater gratitude than it does for the existing guarantee, in the reality of which it pretends not to have much faith, although a declaration of England's withdrawal from it without compensation would be denounced as an act of treachery.

For these reasons the development of the external question in Belgium must necessarily prove slower than in Holland, and probably the course taken will be dictated by the example set by that country. Our attention, therefore, should be mainly directed for the present to the course of political events at The Hague.

Two radical changes have taken place in Dutch sentiment during the last thirty years. There has been a steadily increasing sense of the necessity of an alliance with a Great Power, and there has also been a movement of sympathy towards France. To students of history this gravitation towards the ancient enemy must appear curious. Its explanation is probably to be found in the facts that France is not regarded under present conditions as an

aggressive Power, and that old apprehensions have been superseded by a greater dread. There may be German influences at the Court, but the sympathies of the Dutch people are in an increasing measure French. They are based primarily on the conviction that nothing need be feared from the French even if after a war they recovered Alsace-Lorraine and drove the Germans behind the Rhine. They are strengthened by the conviction that there is everything to be feared from the expansion of Germany set on the acquisition of colonies and naval power. Dutch opinion leans to the conclusion that if France were to go down again before her German rival the victor would take his compensation in Holland and Java, and that there would then be no possibility of successful resistance. With that conviction it is only natural that the Dutch should conclude that their true policy is to co-operate with a still unvanquished France in repelling a common danger. The idea of such an alliance is rendered the more captivating when it is believed that it would contribute towards the maintenance of peace. The addition of Holland to the Dual Alliance would be an asset of considerable value, but its real importance would only become apparent after Belgium had been brought into the same league.

No one who has visited Holland and discussed political questions with its leading men can have any doubt as to the drift of Dutch policy, which is unmistakably towards France and away from Germany. There have been, it is true, some assertions of late to the contrary, and the Vienna press in particular has displayed amazing assurance in declaring that the recent visit of Dr. Kuyper, the Dutch Premier, to that city was a sort of preliminary to the addition of Holland to the Triple Alliance. Dr. Kuyper himself declares that he was merely employing his annual holiday in an inspection of technical schools in Austria. The present condition of the Triple Alliance is not so healthy as to attract new members without more careful consideration of its chances of durability than Dr. Kuyper could have given to the subject during his brief visit to the old imperial city in the dead season. Moreover Holland would not be moved by any indiscretions of Dr. Kuyper, even if he were capable of committing them, which is not

proved. There stands on record the fate of the De Witts when they advocated an unpatriotic policy, as a warning to all who would promote a course opposed to the nation's interests and wishes.

While there is no room for uncertainty as to the direction that Dutch policy is taking, it is, of course, very uncertain when or how a formal declaration of its purport will be made. The military position of Holland, although it has been quietly improved to a surprising extent within the last two years, is not yet such as to incline the Dutch to risk a declaration of war, for the publication of Holland's joining the Dual Alliance might conceivably be received by the Triple Alliance as a defiance and accepted as a signal for the commencement of hostilities. For this reason the negotiations are sure to be kept secret and the publication of any treaty deferred until it is thought that it can be done without committing an imprudence. There is, indeed, one essential matter that the Dutch have to attend to before they may show their hand, and that is the defences of Rotterdam. At present this important port, through which passes a far larger proportion of food into Germany than is generally realised, possesses no defences against serious attack. Its position at the mouth of the Rhine would be vital to Germany, and if it were strengthened to such a degree as to convert it into a first-class fortress Rotterdam would prove a serious thorn in her side. At present the whole system of Dutch national defence centres on Amsterdam. Some of Holland's best military authorities think that it ought to rest on Rotterdam, and all are agreed in considering that place much neglected. The satisfactory settlement of this question will no doubt give greater confidence to the Dutch people, and more assurance to their policy.

But nothing will encourage the Dutch more than the development of Belgian opinion in favour of an alliance with them. All the bases of such a friendly understanding have been laid. The old religious differences which mainly led to the break-up of the short-lived kingdom of the Netherlands are no longer acute. Holland is less aggressively Protestant than it was; the heads of the Roman Catholic Church have indeed every reason to be satisfied

with the total of their followers in the land which William the Silent was supposed to have made Lutheran for ever. On the other side the Belgians are far more disposed to see in their northern neighbours brothers with common interests than when they shared the same destiny and sovereign. The passions of the War of Liberation have died down, and many historical students hold that they arose from a mere misunderstanding. At the present time a spirit of *camaraderie* exists between the Dutch and Belgian armies, which might be trusted to fight well together in defence of their common Netherlands.

If the development of Dutch opinion and Government action has been and will continue to be slow, that of the Belgians may be trusted to prove slower. Their history makes them timid, the curious political conditions under which they have lived during over sixty years explain and justify the hesitation and doubt with which they have approached the reform of their military system and put off the inevitable adoption of compulsory service. They are reluctant to quit the shelter which Europe provided for them, although they well know that it was not done for love of them, but simply because the Powers were safeguarding themselves. In those days no one thought of the Belgians. On the political chessboard they ranked no more than a pawn. Now that Belgium is rich and prosperous, aspiring to play a prominent part in the world of commerce and adventure beyond the seas, and controlling a vast colonial possession with unlimited possibilities of development, her position and the view taken of her by foreign Powers are widely different from what they were when Palmerston arranged the London Conference and Marshal Gérard marched to besiege Antwerp. Europe may well think that such a State as now exists should be able to walk alone, and dispense with a guarantee that has never possessed any reality except for England. For these reasons the Belgians who have long been advocating the adoption of compulsory service without the privilege of compounding for a substitute, and the increase of the peace effective to a figure that would provide Antwerp and the forts of Namur and Liège with adequate garrisons at all times, are doing patriotic work. So far as actual results

go they have not accomplished much, but they have done something towards educating public opinion on the lines that if Belgium is to be saved the Belgians must be ready and trained to defend their country, and that they will find far more friends if they are able to take their own part than if they trust exclusively to the shelter of the old guarantee.

I have ventured to assert that there is no doubt as to the direction in which Dutch policy and sympathies have moved. But clearly as the people of Holland are gravitating towards the Dual Alliance, the tendency in Belgium is still more marked. There the sympathy with France is universal, so also are the dislike and dread of the Germans. These sentiments, which seem more natural in the Walloons than in the Flemings, are, I believe, held most strongly by the latter. Trade competition at Antwerp, where Germany has been working out the same cuckoo policy she is attempting at Shanghai and in the Yangtse Valley, is probably at the root of this opinion. "Away with the Germans" would be just as popular a cry to-day as it was in the time of the Emperor Maximilian. A combination with France is the one political arrangement that would command the unanimous assent of the Belgian races, and however slow the progress may seem to those who only know what is passing on the surface, the bases of such an alliance have probably been well and surely laid in secret. The definitive junction of France and Belgium, on lines similar to those connecting Austria and Roumania, would be the natural precursor of the more extended programme that would bring Holland into the league. Although I have purposely omitted all reference to Russia, Belgium and Holland are being, to a large extent, drawn into the Dual Alliance by her presence, and by belief in her power. Russia has a very good name in those countries, which are largely interested in her material development, and which have nothing to fear from her in any event.

Two important consequences from this possible development and reassertion of Netherlandish influence and power in the sphere of politics claim notice. In the first place, the amount of additional strength and advantage that the new allies would bring to the two Powers, and especially

to France, demands attention, and is well deserving of the careful consideration of military men. In the second place, we are bound to consider how such a development of national opinion and policy in North-West Europe would affect our own position and responsibilities.

Taking the points in their order, it is clear at a glance that the junction of two highly intelligent, vigorous, and wealthy races with the members of the Dual Alliance would be an event of the greatest importance. The addition of thirteen million Netherlanders to France, not as subjects, but as allies, would redress at a stroke that deficiency of population which places her at an apparent disadvantage as compared with Germany. Comparisons are dangerous and unpleasant, but in all essentials it may be affirmed that these races are the equals of a corresponding number of Germans. Valuable as that addition would be from the standpoint merely of numbers, its value is enormously increased by the question of position. Holland and Belgium flank the uncovered side of Germany. The existing position of the Germans in Alsace-Lorraine is so strongly defended from Thionville to Strasburg that the most sanguine French commander would probably refrain from attacking it, preferring to stand on the defensive in his own positions along the Vosges. Not merely would this be an uncongenial rôle for the French army, but no signal successes are ever likely to be gained in strictly defensive warfare. An inconclusive and sanguinary struggle would be almost as bad as a defeat for France, because her inferiority to Germany in population would, after it was over, be accentuated. In such a predicament the French generals might be induced to attempt some hazardous movement that might lead to absolute disaster.

But the addition of Belgium and Holland to the Dual Alliance would open up an entirely new line of attack, and supply a field of operations congenial to the character of the French army, and associated with some of its most memorable successes. By Namur and Liège a Franco-Netherlander army could operate upon Cologne and the Lower Rhine. At Liège it would have a first-class base, for General Brialmont's admirable forts at that place, with

an efficient garrison, are practically impregnable,* and the fortified position at Namur would effectually cover the line of communications with France. While part of the French army would stand on the defensive in the Vosges, the other part, in conjunction with its allies, would occupy Liège and threaten Cologne. Its presence alone at Liège would exercise a paralysing influence on the Germans at Metz, and compel the Germans themselves to risk much to improve the situation. Reference has been made to the necessity for the Dutch to place Rotterdam in a state of suitable defence. A similar obligation rests on the Belgians to keep always an adequate garrison at Liège to hold it against a *coup de main*. On the outbreak of hostilities the Germans would not hesitate to sacrifice an immense number of men to secure that vital position.

As alliances are formed and enlarged nowadays for the purpose of maintaining peace, the addition of two distinctly pacifically disposed States, such as Belgium and Holland are, to the Dual Alliance would tend to strengthen its purely defensive character. They will come out of their shells as it were solely through apprehension lest they may lose their own national forms of independence, Holland because she is coveted for her colonies and for holding the outlets of German rivers, Belgium because her soil is threatened by each of her neighbours in search of a promising field for warlike operations. Against both these perils the only practical safeguard is the conclusion in good time of a defensive alliance with the Powers which have obviously no aggressive designs on either State.

Coming now to the second point, as to how such a regrouping of the Powers would affect England, we are first bound to note that Belgium's repudiation of her neutrality would entail the lapse of the guarantee, which constitutes England's chief Continental responsibility. That obligation may be described as the natural and logical outcome of England's historic policy towards her neighbours. It would be matter of regret if it disappeared, and the regret would be deepened if it were accompanied by the breach of an ancient friendship. At the same time

* True with the artillery of that time; untrue in 1914 with Krupp's 16·8 cannon and mortars.

it is well to look facts in the face from both the British and the Belgian standpoints. What responsibility and risk does the guarantee impose on this country? What advantage and security will it bring to Belgium? With regard to the former, England on the outbreak of a fresh Franco-German war would no doubt conclude separate conventions with the belligerents, as was done in 1870 for the protection of Belgian soil. On that occasion Belgian territory was not violated. For reasons already given, this happy experience is not likely to be repeated during the next war. The battles of the campaign are far more likely to be fought in the Ardennes than in Alsace. England then would apparently be committed to join the Power whose military movements were the slowest, which is on the face of it absurd. She could only escape from the dilemma by openly joining one of the groups of Powers before war was declared, which would in itself signify the tearing up of the London Treaty. In either event this country would commit itself to a definite combination with one group of Powers long before it could feel sure that its true interests were on the same side. The proper and the honourable course would be to cancel the guarantee, and to substitute for it an open Anglo-Belgian treaty binding England to support Belgium against aggression, and leaving it for France or Germany to become a party to the agreement by scrupulously respecting Belgian territory.

Such an arrangement would satisfy Belgian opinion in a sense that the existing guarantee fails to do. The mass of the Belgians seem to be ignorant of this guarantee so far as England is concerned. I have never heard a Belgian refer to it, and the widespread opinion is that Belgium owes her existence to France. Among the *élite* of the official, military, and literary worlds there is of course no such ignorance, but the opinion held with regard to the past has no bearing on the views of the present and the fears of the future. Let it, then, be clearly stated that no confidence is felt in the "guarantee" of England, and it is mainly for that reason that Belgian opinion is turning to other sources of strength and other protectors.

This is not only natural but even to be commended by those who are most anxious for the continuance of the

entente between England and Belgium. If the "guarantee" is hollow and meaningless it is far better that it should be discarded in good time than left to prove itself a broken reed in the hour of trial. The unfortunate part of the matter is that the sentiment of self-assertion in the first place and of providing for self-defence in the second synchronises with a serious development of anti-English feeling in both Belgium and Holland. In those countries any attempt to come to a distinct understanding with England would at present be very unpopular. They are only likely to realise her disinterestedness in the hour of danger, and in the meantime they may do something that will have the effect of throwing England into the arms of the Triple Alliance. It will be a bad thing for both Holland and Belgium if they so mismanage what is in itself a natural and laudable development of their national policies as to convert it into a quarrel with England, but recent occurrences have not tended to raise our opinion of their capacity for self-control. Even if French diplomacy is successful in winning over the whole of the Netherlands to the Dual Alliance, it will be a poor triumph if the process has the effect of uniting England and Germany as they have not been united since the Seven Years' War.

The pacific and dignified entrance of Holland and Belgium into the Dual Alliance without defiance to us or insult to our character would not be a matter at which we should take the least umbrage, or for which we should be called upon to make counter-arrangements. It would be the legitimate proceeding of two peoples who conceived that they were menaced in their liberties and possessions. Nor if it were brought about in a quiet fashion, with due regard for prudence, need it imperil even for a moment the peace of Europe. The addition of members, whose desire for peace and freedom from chauvinism are beyond suspicion, to the Dual Alliance would tend rather to accentuate its pacific character than to threaten an early assumption of the offensive. Dutch phlegm and Flemish caution might also to some degree modify and restrain the bellicose inclinations of French patriots. Nor would it be altogether a misfortune for us if the strengthening of the array in the other camp were to oblige Germany to curtail

her naval programme and to concentrate all her efforts on her land forces and defences.

By whatever methods the new movement among the peoples of the Netherlands for union between themselves and for combination with France and Russia may be brought to consummation, it will be well for us to be prepared for such a contingency. They may take a period of years in effecting their arrangements. Both races are cautious and slow in their transaction of business, and there are undoubtedly some military questions of organisation that have first to be settled before the final step is taken. On the other hand the whole question may be precipitated by a crisis along their borders. The French have shown admirable restraint for over thirty years, but no one can tell at what moment their patience will reach the snapping-point. Once they are satisfied of the intentions and sympathy of their northern neighbours they may not wait until tedious *pourparlers* have been brought to a formal conclusion. Holland and Belgium may be thinking mainly of peace, but they may have to conclude their new departure to the music of the cannon. It is true that there is always the pacific influence of Russia to be taken into account, but Russia herself may be drawn into war in Asia, and there is always the possibility that France, sick at heart for the deferred *revanche*, may break loose from all control. The causes which are driving Holland and Belgium to coalesce, and to seek protectors in whose power they believe and from whom they conceive that they have nothing to fear, are altogether natural, and spring not from the intrigues of statesmen but from the unfettered and spontaneous growth of national apprehensions. Public opinion in both countries is slowly but surely guiding their Governments in what it thinks to be the right direction, and moulding the national policy of the Netherlands in the best form to safeguard their independence, prosperity, and dynasties.

GERMANY AND BELGIUM*

IF the war between Japan and Russia has revolutionised the position in the Far East, we may before long have cause to exclaim that it has produced a not less startling change in the situation of Western Europe. A new Power holds the Eastern stage, but at the same moment an old Power, whose system of policy has always been merciless, has acquired on the Western a military preponderance that will call for all the vigilance of the friends of liberty if it is to be restrained. The downfall of Russia leaves Germany under the Prussian ægis incomparably the first military Power on the Continent. Her numbers, and still more the strategic advantages of her position, give her an incontestable superiority over France, and, now that Russia has become for the moment a *quantité négligeable* in Europe, she is not refraining from showing her sense of it in the old Bismarckian manner. It is settled design, not tactless egotism, that has led the Emperor William to affront France in Morocco, and the insult may soon develop into an injury that no high-mettled nation could endure. The French President and people are all for peace, but even their patient philosophy may not have contemplated having to receive orders from Berlin. The Moroccan problem was to have provided France with a gratifying triumph; the German Emperor is bent on converting it into a humiliation, and only the prompt and vigorous action of Great Britain may suffice to save the situation and avert an international calamity.

It is not only in Morocco that German policy has for some time past been hatching mischief, and in its habitually careless way the British Government has remained ignorant of, or indifferent to, what was happening almost before its

* *Nineteenth Century and After*, July, 1905.

gaze. No one has ever affirmed that England follows a settled, systematic policy in her foreign affairs. It is nearer the truth to say that she commits a succession of blunders, and then by a stroke of genius or good fortune repairs them all by an alliance with Japan or the revival of the *entente cordiale*. But the situation in Western Europe is not identical with that in the Far East. In the Chinese provinces and on the Sea of Japan, Japan has done the work alone; in Europe, when and if the blow falls in Lorraine, England must be ready to do her share of the work. If it is made clear in good time that she has both the intention and the strength to play her part in the maintenance of the balance of power in Western Europe, the menacing clouds at present obscuring the horizon may pass off without breaking in a storm. But if she falters, the blow will have been delivered before her intentions are revealed in action, and the effort to retrieve an initial catastrophe may prove beyond her power.

While Morocco is in everybody's mouth—and it may just as easily furnish a *casus belli* as did a Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish throne thirty-five years ago—there have been still clearer indications for some time past of German plans in the sister kingdoms of Belgium and Holland. In speaking of those States it may be necessary to draw a sharp line between the purpose and projects of their Governments and the sympathies of their peoples; but until there is a revolution the political action of a country is directed by the ruler and his Government. The immense progress made by the German propaganda in those States within the last few years appears to have escaped notice. It has been more remarkable in Belgium even than in Holland, where a German prince is the sovereign's consort. That the Belgian official world has long been mistrustful of France is no great secret. In the last generation it was the policy of Napoleon the Third that caused the dread; in the present it is the fear that a closer alliance with her might lead to an inroad of Republicanism fatal to monarchical institutions. That fear has not been diminished by the extreme anti-clerical action of recent French Ministries, and the sympathy of the Catholic party in Belgium—the larger half of the nation—has, consequently,

been temporarily alienated from France. This natural tendency has harmonised with and promoted the plans favoured by the Belgian Government. The gravitation towards Germany through dynastic considerations has now been encouraged, if not accelerated, by a religious movement that has stilled, if not stifled, the sympathy naturally felt by two branches of a kindred race speaking to a great extent the same tongue. But it may be very much questioned whether the gravitation of Belgian opinion towards Germany would have been so pronounced as it has become during the last two years if it had not been also alienated during that period to as great an extent from England as it has been from France.

Down to the year 1885 the reliance of the Belgian nation on the firmness and efficacy of British protection was perfect and without doubt. In that year speeches were made in the House of Commons to the effect that England could no longer be expected to champion Belgium in every eventuality. This was not an exposition of policy by the British Government, but it was the opinion of responsible persons who had been Ministers. The old belief in Belgium that whatever the others might do, one of the guaranteeing Powers might be implicitly trusted, was then rudely shaken, and during the Boer war the unfriendly agencies always operating in foreign countries widened the breach, not merely by representing that England's guarantee was not to be relied upon, but that she had not the power to make it good. Nothing has happened since to undo the mischief worked by designing men with regard to Anglo-Belgian relations in 1899-1900. On the contrary, those relations have been made worse by the anti-Congo campaign. There are some persons who feign to think that the Belgian people ought not to resent the unqualified attacks on their system and their countrymen in Central Africa. Their views on human nature, to say nothing of national spirit, must be peculiar. The incontestable truth is that the Belgian people resent these attacks just as much as we should do any similarly sweeping charges on our rule and our compatriots in India. The really singular thing in the international situation is that the same sentimental outburst, pitched in a key of frenzy, which cost us the

cordiality of the Sultan of Turkey—a really indispensable ally for us with sixty million Mahomedan fellow-subjects and interests that should be predominant in several of the most important countries of Islam—has now probably lost us the trust and goodwill of the one Continental people that really desired to possess our friendship and confidence. But the irony of the two occurrences is revealed in the circumstance that it is Germany who has benefited by our blunders. At Constantinople her influence has long been supreme; at Brussels the protection of Germany is solicited and relied upon. To complete the contrast between the results from a system of practical statesmanship and those of an *insouciant* zeal for unattainable humanitarian ideals, it would only need for the truth of my conviction to be established that the Foreign Office was lured on in 1902-3 to make its attack on the Congo Administration by the encouragement and half-promises of Germany.

The first object and duty of a Belgian ruler is to preserve the neutrality and independence of his country and to keep it free from the ravages of war. In 1870 Belgium, with the vigilant support of England, maintained her rights intact; during the crisis of 1875 preparations were made to ensure the active participation of this country in the defence of Belgium *against* Germany. Now the situation is altered. The Belgians mostly fear that in any war the temptation to the French to move down the Meuse Valley and secure a fair field for offensive operations from Liège may prove irresistible. The dominant wish now is to keep out the French instead of the Germans, as in 1870 and 1875. This desire is increased by the conviction that whilst a treaty with Germany would deter the French from crossing the frontier, a similar arrangement with France would not restrain the Germans, and might very probably impel them to commence an offensive movement for the protection of their right flank that would entail the inclusion of a large part of Belgium within the field of operations. The first advantage, from the Belgian point of view, of a "protecting" treaty with Germany is that it would be the most efficacious means of keeping opposing armies out of the country. But it has other contingent recommendations that make it scarcely less attractive. The support of a victorious

Germany—and no other result appears, in Belgian opinion, to be possible—would provide an efficient shield for the Congo State against the alleged rapacity of England. Finally, the ulterior risks from the friendship and protection of Germany are deemed less than those from the side of France. An easily victorious France might wish to convert Belgium into a Département de la Dyle, whereas Germany would no more interfere with the dynasty than it does in Saxony or Bavaria, and would limit any union to the conditions of a Zollverein.

There are obvious considerations, therefore, that explain the gravitation of Belgium towards Germany. The practical advantages are not to be overlooked; and additional weight has been given to them by a feeling of resentment towards the English for their attacks on the Congo Administration, and by no little apprehension as to the security of that State against our aggression. Of the reality of the movement no doubt can be entertained, but whether it has found formal expression within the four corners of a regular convention is, naturally, one of the closest kept secrets of diplomacy. There are, however, many well-informed persons who are convinced that a secret treaty was concluded, seventeen or eighteen years ago, between these neighbours as the consequence of the belief referred to that England might no longer be implicitly trusted. If such an arrangement was concluded, it is probable that its stipulations, through the lapse of time and the change in the European position, now require some modification, and possibly some enlargement. The benevolent neutrality of Belgium on behalf of Germany, to be converted into an active partnership under circumstances that we do not know, would seriously embarrass the French position on the north-east frontier, and would put an end to all the favourite schemes of French strategists.

In Holland the progress of the German propaganda has been less pronounced than in Belgium, because there was no need to attain the same definite results. The strategical position of Holland would count for nothing in any imminent European struggle. The active participation of her army alone, and without the co-operation of Belgium,

or the South Netherlands, would never turn the scale in any great struggle. No one menaces Holland at the present time. German policy is in accord with the wishes of the Dutch people, who mainly desire to be left alone. There is a spreading conviction in Holland that little States such as it is are helpless beside great empires, and this has fostered an apathy that precludes the adoption of a more spirited and prescient policy. The attitude of the Dutch in view of German aggression in the future is one of indifference. They are assured that under no circumstances will Germany perpetrate any act of aggression at their expense, and as their dynasty promises before long to be a purely German one, there are many who will philosophically accept that change as an indication of the natural fate of their country. Of course there is truth in the recent assurances of a Dutch official, that there is a powerful party in Holland who cling to their independence and old-fashioned ways, and who detest the idea of being disciplined by the Prussians, but unfortunately they are not shaping the policy of their country at the present hour. That is being done by Dr. Kuyper, and the moulding of the destinies of this little nation in his hands is the more insidious because his policy harmonises with the characteristics of the nation in requiring only somnolent inaction until the opportunity for effective useful action shall have passed by.

The defection of some States, the weakness of others, imposes on the British Government an enormous responsibility at the present juncture. On its wisdom and promptitude during a critical period, the length of which cannot be foreseen, the political fabric of Western Europe depends. Germany, well knowing that the Triple Alliance is almost moribund, and clearly perceiving that the discontent of her own allies, as well as the profound distrust of her intentions felt by the whole of the British people, will soon leave her isolated in Europe, is girding up her loins to crush France whilst Russia is too crippled to come to her aid, and before the British people fully arouses itself to the necessity perhaps of sending half a million men to support the French at Châlons. To strike a people set on peace, and with no thought of aggression in their minds,

in this sudden and unscrupulous manner will be a crime against humanity, but history shows that it is a method often favoured by the House of Prussia. There has been but one slight modification in the Hohenzollern family policy, due to what is magniloquently called the progress of civilisation. Whereas Frederick the Great could carry out his plans the moment he had decided to do so, the Emperor William has to take some account of appearances and to create a justification that shall allay the German conscience. This may require a little time, but it will not be difficult. In such matters the German conscience is not hyper-sensitive. The Emperor has but to show that through France he is striking the first blow against England, and the trick is done. "England's Arch-enemy" is too astute not to know that.

The paramount question of the hour is, How is England going to prevent the perpetration of a monstrous iniquity? She can only do so by promptly exercising all the means and all the influence at her disposal. It is said—I know it is believed in the highest quarters—that Germany can be deterred from prosecuting this adventure by the threat—no, by the clear perception without a threat—of what England can do upon the sea. It has been glibly written that British intervention will cost Germany her fleet and her colonies. This boast may not bear critical examination. The German navy is not yet strong enough to cope with the British in a contest for the mastery of the seas, but its leaders undoubtedly look forward to put our mettle and our efficiency to the test in the earlier phases of the struggle, and to saving their fleet for another day in its safe places of retreat during the later. And as for her colonies, they are probably safe because they present no great attractions for acquisition. The deterrent provided, then, by what are called the certain consequences of British intervention is not so efficacious as appears to be believed. If Great Britain intends to restrict any intervention on the side of France to the ocean, that will not prevent the German Emperor from carrying out his projects. He must, of course, be prepared to lose something; but if he were to triumph over France, as he is convinced that he would, his gains would so immeasurably exceed his losses that he

could be indifferent to the latter. Among the most prized of those gains, in his mind, would be this: If France is again overthrown, one of the conditions forced upon her will be the restriction of her army to a limited number, which will leave Germany free to diminish the expenditure on her own army and to increase that on her navy, and to make it a really colossal force. That peril should be considered by every British subject anxious for the security of his island home, for it will surely be the penalty of any shortcomings in our support of France, or in our appreciation of the dangers of the existing position of affairs.

The notification that any co-operation with France against unprovoked aggression would not be restricted to naval operations might have a really deterrent effect, for, although it is the custom in Germany to speak lightly of the British Army, it is still not forgotten that we did send a quarter of a million men to South Africa, and that, despite many blunders, we did triumph over an obstinate foe and great natural difficulties. If it were really believed that we would do now what we ought to have done in October 1870, after the surrender of Metz, then in all probability German aggression would never emerge from the chrysalis of "bluff"; but, unfortunately, there is scepticism at Berlin as to the thoroughness with which we would support France in an hour of danger. If we were on genuinely good terms with Belgium, a means could easily be found for showing the Germans that we were resolved to act up to the full letter and spirit of our engagements and their accruing responsibilities. But, unfortunately, our relations with Belgium are below the surface as bad as they can be. If they are not, it is quite feasible to do at this moment what was done in 1875 during a very similar crisis, and to show by the despatch of a military commission to the Meuse that we do not intend to shirk our obvious duties in Western Europe. But at this moment this way of speaking does not appear to be open to us. For the present, at all events, it is to Germany herself, and not to England, that Belgium looks for her own salvation.

How, then, can England act expeditiously and effectually for the preservation of peace? There is one course that, if taken promptly, may ensure it, and our influence

properly exercised might avail to secure its adoption. The peace of Europe may be saved not in Paris or London, but in Vienna. The restraining influence of the Austrian Emperor may effect what no other agency could accomplish. Austria is a party to the Triple Alliance, but of course there is no obligation on her to assist North Germany in an aggressive war of which she did not approve. Nor would there be any obligation on her to go to the assistance of her ally if England joined France. The same observations apply to Italy. But an intimation to this effect from Germany's two partners might produce a salutary impression at Berlin. The notification from Italy would not have much effect, because it has for some time been realised that no active help against France could be counted upon from her. But such an intimation from Austria would be of very different import. It would be touching the sore spot in the inner mind of the North Germans when they talk about the possibility of their coming isolation unless they strike their blow at France quickly. Whether the Emperor Francis Joseph can be induced, even by his fervent love of peace, to give the counsel that will preserve it is uncertain, but there are strong reasons in the internal condition of Austria herself that would justify her ruler in entering a firm protest against the rampagious assertion of Pan-Teutonism. But of course the essential preliminary for any action by Austria would have to be an assurance from this country that it would not swerve a hair's breadth from its determination to stand by France and all those who sought to restrain the German Emperor by word and deed.

Austria, indeed, as a member of the Triple Alliance, is not under the same suspicion at Berlin as Italy is, but there is an uneasy feeling there that she may not always see with the same eyes as the Emperor Francis Joseph does. It must be remembered that Austria did not become a party to that alliance from fear or dislike of France. If she joined it for any other reason than to deter Prussia from seeking to repeat and extend her triumph of 1866, it was with the idea of securing help against Russia. Then, after an interval, came the revelation that Prussia had made an "insurance" treaty with Russia against her, and since that occurrence Austria has been engaged, and not without

success, in establishing better relations with Russia on her own account. The fact that Russia is no longer so formidable as she was will very likely strengthen Austro-Russian goodwill, as both States may evidently have need of each other. It is necessity, not affection, that has made Austria so long subservient to her old rival on the northern frontier. A long and gloomy period, during which the Hapsburgs have lived in a state of enforced self-repression, may be passing away, and the psychological moment for showing that Austria has recovered her independent judgment* may have come at a moment when no other agency would serve to restrain what is called Germany, but which is really Prussia, from embarking upon an unscrupulous but distinctly tempting adventure.

Austria, like England, would be permanently injured if the schemes for the final humiliation of France were carried out. Her subservience to Prussia would be made permanent, the projects of the Pan-Germans would be soon put into effect, and the long-talked-of disruption of the Dual Empire could not be averted. But a bold stand now may bring salvation. Opposition to Germany may remedy the political evils in Hungary, where the Germans are hated with a fervour that rivals that of the typical Ulsterman for his Catholic countryman. It will rally to the Hapsburgs all the elements of loyalty that still abound in their wide-stretching dominions. The adoption of such a course in the present international situation would also have no perils, because it must be clear to everyone that it only needs the defection of Austria to produce that isolation of Germany, the fear of which is now said to be the main cause of the Berlin desire to dispose summarily of France. That result England must at all costs not permit; but, with the horrors of war so vividly impressed upon us by what has happened in the Far East, we must still continue to hope that Europe may be spared similar scenes, and that, if no other way can be found to avert the calamity, the Austrian Emperor will say the weighty word at Berlin that cannot be disregarded, and that must turn the scale against the cravings of an almost insane ambition.

* These were the views of Baron Aehrenthal, whose death was an irreparable loss to the Dual Monarchy.

THE FRANCO-GERMAN FRONTIER*

It is unnecessary to refer to any recent rumours or journalistic polemics for the purpose of investing the subject of the Franco-German frontier with topical interest, because it always forms one of the most important and inspiring military questions that can occupy the attention and excite the curiosity of intelligent men. The fact that it is the artificial boundary between two great military States and two races whose relations have always been hostile would alone suffice to justify an attempt to supply the general reader with the essential facts relating to what some French patriot once called "France's iron frontier in the Vosges." There is no other frontier in the world that in any way resembles that which extends for 340 kilometres or about 212 English miles from, let us say, the Swiss district of Porrentruy to the ruins of the once famous Abbey of Orval in Belgium. At a short and varying distance from an arbitrary line, drawn without symmetry and in reckless disregard of even local convenience by an intolerant victor in 1871, France has constructed with immense patience and at enormous cost in thirty years a fortified barrier behind which she hoped to breathe in partial rather than perfect security. The heights of the Vosges are crowned and encompassed by fortress, fort and battery; strategic railways have been built to facilitate the concentration of the French army on the menaced quarter, and chosen troops stand ready at their posts night and day to meet an onset that will very likely come without warning. The searchlights constantly trained on the roads and railways leading out of the German territory from the "phares" that form part of the Toul position are true indicators of the unceasing anxiety and vigilance of the men guarding this exposed frontier.

* *Contemporary Review*, April, 1906.

I do not propose to say a word in this article about the position on the German side of the frontier. The exigencies of space would alone prevent it, as not the least difficult part of a difficult task is to compress an account of the French positions into a limited number of pages. But it may be remarked that Germany has ostentatiously refused to imitate the procedure of France, and to answer the construction of armoured fort and earthwork on Gallic territory by the erection of similar works on her own. It is true that she has recently added some outlying forts to the formidable defences of Metz, but with cynical frankness she avows that these are intended not for defence, but for offence, because they will command the French railways along the frontier from Pagny to Conflans. Germany's military plans, then, are based on the fixed resolve to undertake the offensive at once when war is decided on, and for their realisation the elaborate fortification of her frontier would not be a help but a hindrance. Moltke laid down in his cold and clear way the plan to be followed. He wrote: "On the outbreak of war"—and some of his successors at the Berlin headquarters staff have improved on this version by saying, "Before the declaration of war"—"the German army will at once cross the frontier in the greatest possible numbers and advance until it meets the enemy." The German plan of campaign in a given eventuality is thus clearly defined by the great strategist, and there has been no indication of any intention to deviate from it. There is consequently no need to refer to this part of the subject again. The matters that claim our attention are to pass in review the preparations that have been made by the French to arrest this human torrent, to point out some defects that have been discovered by French officers in their defensive position, and to offer some general comments on the whole question that will assist the reader in forming an opinion for himself as to the strength of that carefully prepared frontier which is the outmost guard of the roads leading from the north-east to Paris.

It will be clearest and most convenient to divide the subject under seven heads, which will relate to as many groups of fortified or other positions from Belfort on the

south to Montmédy on the north. As it will be most convenient to describe the Toul position in conjunction with the unfortified state of Nancy, I propose to take them in the following order:—(1) Belfort; (2) Epinal; (3) Verdun; (4) Montmédy; (5) Lunéville; (6) Toul; and (7) Nancy. For the sake of clearness, however, it may be pointed out here that topographically Toul is between Epinal and Verdun, and that Lunéville is south-east of Toul and Nancy, and with its Fort Manonviller lies nearest of all the French positions to German territory.

There is one matter that claims notice in the first place more especially because it has no relation to warlike plans and preparations. This is the extraordinary advance in the prosperity and wealth of the border districts of French Lorraine since the war of 1870-1. When that struggle took place they were to a great extent composed of wild and sparsely-cultivated tracts; the villages of the Vosges were inhabited by a simple and charming people pursuing the handicrafts of their ancestors, and the towns of the Meuse and Moselle valleys were the tranquil centres of an old world existence which was not to be found in any other part of France. Nancy, the capital, had scarcely altered since the days of the Dukes of Lorraine, who lost their duchy to become rulers of Austria; and as a convenient indication of recent change it may be mentioned that the spot on which Charles the Bold lost his life was then shown outside the walls. Now all is different, and if something of the change is due to the influx of French citizens from the lost provinces who resolved to preserve their nationality at all costs, the remarkable discoveries of the mineral wealth of the Vosges have been the principal factor in the conversion of a primitive region into one of the busiest and most progressive parts of France. Within the period named, Lorraine, which possessed scarcely a mine in 1870, has become the most productive mineral area in France. It is declared that three-fourths of the mineral wealth of the whole State are now derived from this single and partially dismembered province, and certainly the furnaces and cinder heaps of Longwy rival those to be seen in Staffordshire. There are some Lorrainers who assert that if strategic considerations did not require the preservation of

the Vosges they would become the most productive mineral region on the surface of the globe. Toul and the Haye forest, for instance, repose on a bed of oolitic iron. The extraordinary mineral wealth of the French districts lying east of the fortified line that is the immediate subject of this paper has to be remembered in considering the importance and the necessity of defending them, and of preventing their severance from the country of which they form so valuable a part. The change that has passed over this region is made visible in the condition of Nancy itself, which is no longer a quiet country town outside the main current of national life, but a busy, handsomely-constructed city, full of animation, occupied by rich citizens, and reflecting in its own happy and prosperous condition the happiness and prosperity of France. The spot on which the rash Duke of Burgundy ended his stormy career is no longer outside the walls; it is covered by the square that bears his name in the new portion of the town.

There has been another and less agreeable consequence of this mining activity. The mines have attracted large numbers of alien workmen. Italians, Belgians, and even Germans are collectively more numerous than the Frenchmen engaged in this mineral exploitation. At some places, for instance, more copies of the *Gazzetta del Popolo* are sold than of the *Petit Journal*, and the French villagers often declare themselves afraid to leave their homes after dark because "ces Italiens" are too free in the use of the knife. While the importance of this region in pacific pursuits has so enormously increased, its strategic value has diminished in proportion. Longwy, which under a different dispensation might have provided France with a base for taking the offensive, is dismantled, and the great plain of the Woëvre lies open and defenceless, giving Germany the chance of striking at the weak and unfortified section of the Meuse north of Verdun. Enough has been said on these points to show that the development of Lorraine since the last war has been unfavourable to the possibilities of its successful defence where no fortification has been provided, at the same time that it has made that defence more than ever necessary.

I. THE POSITION OF BELFORT.

Belfort, which successfully held the Germans in check throughout the war of 1870-1, and which shared with Bitsch (now German) the glory of being the only fortified places attacked that kept the tricolour flying down to the signature of peace, forms the most southern fortified position on the French side of the frontier. The Germans cannot outflank or evade it without violating Swiss territory. The temptation to do so does not exist, practically speaking, because the not less formidable position of Besançon, and the line of forts flanking Switzerland and continuing as far south as Culoz, block the road. There is another reason. Any failure of success or partial discomfiture in this direction would be followed by a French invasion of Germany, and the execution of a possibly alarming diversion across the Upper Rhine into Baden. It is not, therefore, in front of Belfort that the Germans will attempt the execution of their offensive movement into France.

Formerly the gap between the Vosges and the Jura was admitted to be one of the weak points of the French frontier. One of the justifications of French policy in old days was the necessity of removing this weakness by advancing the frontier to the Rhine. The loss of Alsace revived the peril by bringing the Germans close to the gates of Belfort. It has been again dispelled by the completion of the formidable position of Belfort, which is very different from the fortress that resisted the Germans thirty-five years ago. The old works and forts at Belfort have been encircled by fifteen forts, besides batteries, occupying admirably selected sites, which command all the roads from German territory as well as the Rhône to Rhine canal. The eastern forts command a considerable extent of German territory, and with the minor forts at and near Montbéliard, commanding the passage of the Doubs, it is almost inconceivable that any German army would seriously attempt to force a passage by the famous gap or *trouée* of Belfort. The fort of Giromagny—more correctly that of Tête du Milieu on an eminence outside the small town of Giromagny—crosses its fire with that of

Fort du Salbert, part of the Belfort position, thus effectively closing all routes south of the Ballon d'Alsace. Without employing the word impregnable it may be said that the position of Belfort fully answers all the needs and expectations of the French, and as it is the only group of which it is permissible to speak in this unqualified manner, it differs essentially from the other groups of which we shall have to speak. Its very strength constitutes the one drawback when computing the relative forces of attack and defence along the frontier. A considerable portion of the French army will be locked up in this quarter, and no one will venture to attack it. Instead of concentrating here twice or thrice the defending force admitted to be necessary for the attack on fortified places in German text books, the Germans will stand on the defensive with a comparatively small army on the Upper Rhine.

II. EPINAL.

North of Giromagny the French line of defence retires from the Alsatian frontier and follows the low range of the Faucilles Hills, more or less parallel with part of the course of the Upper Moselle. Five forts at Servance, Chateau Lambert, Rupt, Parmont and Arches defend the Faucilles, and connect the Belfort position with that of Epinal. Fort Servance, the most southern of these points, is placed on the crest of the Ballon de Servance, which marks the point of junction of the Faucilles with the Vosges. It is in immediate contiguity with the loftier Ballon d'Alsace in German territory, which is unfortified and up which it is deemed impossible to convey heavy artillery. As the Ballon de Servance is itself at an altitude of 3,800 feet, this assumption is in all probability well founded. Its natural advantages have been supplemented by art, and it is rightly considered one of the strongest and best equipped single forts along the whole frontier. Its fire completely commands the high road from Mulhouse to Epinal, the only route open for an invasion on a large scale from Upper Alsace. The other forts on the Faucilles command successive sections of this important road, while easy and secure intercommunication has been provided between all these forts by an admirable military road

carried along the unexposed side of the crest of the Faucilles. I take the following graphic description of the Ballon de Servance from M. Ardouin-Dumazet's vivid "Voyage en France" (22 série):—

At an altitude of 1,189 mètres, and more than 600 mètres above the Moselle, the Fort of the Ballon of Servance spreads itself out, squat, its traverses resembling enormous mole hills. This fort, dominated by some 30 mètres by the Ballon d'Alsace which marks the frontier, is the most severe place of residence among all the border posts. At this altitude in the Alps cultivation would be visible on all sides; here only a sparse stubble grows. The winters are sometimes terrible here. Once the hoar frosts commence, the garrison is reduced to 50 men commanded by a lieutenant. For six months in the year the officer is left to his own society, the occasional brief visits of his brother officers from the other posts lower down alone breaking the monotony of his existence.

At Remiremont, one of the most attractive towns of the Vosges, and defended by Fort Parmont, are the headquarters of the division entrusted with the defence of this part of the frontier. It is contended by French military writers that these forts effectually guard the weak line of the Faucilles, but this view cannot be endorsed unless the German attack should be feeble and not pushed home. The fifth fort named, that of Arches, commands the passage of the Moselle where the Vologne joins that river. The fort of Arches is well placed; the road from Mulhouse referred to passes through it, and it may be considered as the advanced post of the formidable position of Epinal. As has been frequently pointed out, it was the absence of fortified places in the Faucilles that led to the collapse of the *franc-tireur* corps in the Vosges during the old war at the very moment that the greatest hopes were being reposed in the consequences of their operations on the German communications. This defect no longer exists.

Epinal, which before the war had only a cavalry regiment as its garrison, is now an entrenched camp, and the headquarters of an army corps. It is surrounded by forts at a distance of five or six miles, and they form a circle of not less than thirty miles in circumference. The investment of this place alone would require several army corps, and they would find it a heavy task. The position of Epinal includes between forty and fifty forts and dependent batteries. The forts are connected with the central arsenal by lines of railway which are exclusively reserved

for military purposes. Epinal is a position of importance not merely for defence. Its more important *rôle* would be that it provides a secure and well-placed base for the collection of one of France's main armies that might carry the offensive into Germany, ignoring or masking the formidable defences of Strasbourg. Placed north of the Faucilles, it completes the defence of that section of the frontier, and supplementing Belfort to the south it may be said to provide almost complete security for the southern portion of the French frontier against attack from Upper Alsace. In this quarter also more or less complete adhesion may be given to the views and hopes of the French as to the efficacy of this part of their frontier defences. The forcing of the Faucilles would be a conceivably successful task for the Germans at heavy cost, but the advantages of such a move, with Belfort on one flank and Epinal on the other, are not evident.

From Belfort to Epinal there is not a mile of the frontier that is not covered by the fire of French guns. The line of defence trends westward, and while Belfort is practically on the frontier, Epinal is nearly thirty miles from German territory. North of Epinal occurs the first undefended gap in the frontier. For rather more than thirty miles from the most northern fort of Epinal to Pont St. Vincent, the most southern fort of the Toul position, no attempt has been made to defend the line of the Moselle. An invader coming by Lunéville can break through here if he chooses; but long before he could reach Neufchateau, the rallying point for all the troops coming from the south and centre of France, the main French army could be concentrated there, and it is consequently not at all probable that a German commander would risk an advance in this quarter while the main defences of the French remained intact.

Leaving the all-important Toul position for later description, and jumping over it, as it were, we come now to the line of the Meuse and the position of

III. VERDUN.

Immediately north of the Toul position the line of forts constructed for the defence of the passages over the Meuse

commences at Gironville and ends at Verdun. This portion of the French defences is distinguished as that of the Côtes de Meuse, and the fortified position of Verdun at its northern extremity forms with Belfort, Epinal and Toul the series of four first-class fortified military centres in the advanced line on the eastern frontier. What is now called the Côtes de Meuse was before the war the Argonne Orientale, and the object of the military engineer was to defend the points at which the Meuse could be crossed—viz., in their order from south to north Commercy, St. Mihiel, Troyon and Génicourt. For this purpose the following five forts taken in the same order have been constructed on the right bank of the Meuse:—Gironville, Liouville, St. Mihiel, Troyon and Génicourt. These forts, practically speaking, face Metz at an interval of between 35 and 40 miles. They occupy an elevated plateau which rises sheer from the Meuse, and which has been called “a natural rampart.” Notwithstanding the great strength of the forts and the advantages of the position, it is believed that the Germans would strike first at this section of the frontier defences, and for this reason the French have made preparations here for an active defence as well as a passive. St. Mihiel, in the centre of the line of the Meuse, is the headquarters of what is called the mobile defence, as contrasted with the fixed defence represented by Toul and Verdun. A strong division is kept here in constant readiness to take the field at once on an invasion, and cavalry regiments are also stationed with the same object at Lerouville, Sampigny and Liouville. Another infantry division and a cavalry brigade are quartered permanently at Commercy. On the Côtes de Meuse the French have, therefore, a very considerable force ready to take the field, in order to harass and retard a German advance from Metz. But, strong as is the French position on this line, it is not seriously disputed by French military authorities that if the German main attack is made here this line must be pierced, although it is hoped that the cost to the victor would be very heavy. Still more important, time might be secured by a resolute resistance for the concentration of the main French army at Bar le Duc.

We come now to the main position of Verdun, the most

southern forts of which are eighteen miles distant from St. Mihiel, while Verdun itself is forty-five miles north by west of Toul. Verdun has always been a strategical point of great importance. Placed astride the Meuse which flows through it in several channels, Verdun is on the main road to Rheims and Paris, and Bazaine was striving to gain it when he allowed himself to be turned back at Mars la Tour. It is also a station on the principal line of railway from Paris to Metz. Consequently its defence has been carried out in the most elaborate manner. The formidable citadel fort on the height of Belleville which overlooks the little town is the centre of a circumference dotted with eleven of the most powerful forts, to say nothing of the almost countless batteries that fill up the intervals. These forts are Donaumont, Vaux, St. Michel, Tavannes, Rozellier, Haudanville, Glorieux, Regret, Landrecourt, La Charme and Bois Bourrus. Tavannes is the fort commanding the tunnel of the railway on the side of Metz. The permanent garrison of the position is never less than 15,000 strong, and exceeds in number the civil population of the little town. Besides being a great fortress Verdun is a vast arsenal; artillery parks are among the chief ornaments of the place, and four pairs of rails lead out of the station and continue the whole way to Rheims, Chalons and Paris. Verdun contains all that is needful for the concentration of two army corps, and in itself it could resist the most energetic attack for an indefinite period. At least three army corps would be needed to invest it effectually, and for that reason if for no other it may be considered very dubious if it would be attacked at all, at least in the early campaigns of the war. We come now to

IV. MONTMÉDY,

although it has no claim to be named in the same category as the Cyclopean works that have occupied our attention. The first line of the French defence on the eastern frontier terminates at Verdun. Nothing has been attempted in the way of defending the Meuse below Verdun down to Mezières. There are places for easy crossings of the river at Dun, Stenay and Sedan. Still, in the remote north of

French territory, there are the nominally fortified places of Longwy and Montmédy. Longwy has recently been dismantled, and if the Germans chose to cross this part of the frontier from Thionville they would encounter no resistance. Montmédy on the Chiers, within sight as has been said of Orval, is still a fortified position, and as it is forty miles within the frontier it is not exposed to immediate attack, while owing to its remoteness and to its lying off any important route it might enjoy immunity from any attack whatever. Montmédy occupies a strong natural position on an eminence. Without any pretensions to rank as a first-class position, it is more formidable than is generally believed, and might offer a stubborn resistance. Still, nothing has been done to make Montmédy one of the pivots for the defence of the Lorraine frontier, and its capture would have little or no influence on the fortune of any war between France and Germany.

V. LUNÉVILLE.

We now return to the centre of the French position, and here Lunéville forms the advanced post. Lunéville and the powerful double fort of Manonviller would be called on to play an important part at the very commencement of the struggle. A glance at the map will show that Lunéville is near the frontier on the main line to Strasbourg, and Manonviller, half-way between it and Blamont, commands the railway as it passes from the French Avricourt to the German. Manonviller is a fort thoroughly up to date. Its armoured cupolas have received a concrete shell to protect them against high explosives, and it is confidently believed that whoever made the attempt would find it a hard nut to crack. Lunéville itself is not fortified, but it is the headquarters of a cavalry division and of a mobile force upon which would devolve very important and dangerous duties on the outbreak of war. Four regiments of cavalry, distinguished as the division of Lunéville, are in constant readiness to cross the frontier and to do all in their power to hamper and delay the concentration of the German armies. This is the reason for giving Lunéville a distinct place in this survey of the frontier defences.

VI. TOUL.

In the very centre of the French position, half-way between Epinal and Verdun, is Toul, and it may be remarked that it is a very different Toul from the one which surrendered to the Germans in the autumn of 1870 after a six weeks' siege. Toul, on the Moselle, is the central point of the strongly fortified position on the plateau covered by the forest of Haye, which is immediately west of Nancy. The Toul position is regarded as the key of the French frontier, and the forest of Haye as the most advantageous screen for the preparation of an offensive movement on a large scale. The entrenched camp of Toul is supplemented by two advanced forts, Frouard on the north in the fork of the Moselle and the Meurthe, and Pont St. Vincent on the south guarding an important crossing of the Moselle. Behind Toul on the Meuse are the secondary forts of Bourlémont and Pagny la Blanche Côte, protecting the railway rendezvous at Neufchateau. It has been contended that so long as the French hold Toul and its advanced forts at Frouard and Pont St. Vincent the Germans will neither occupy Nancy nor make use of its railways. This assumption ignores the important fact that the French might be more reluctant to destroy their own beautiful city than the Germans.

From the top of the central fort of St. Michel, the mountain that constitutes the dominant point in the whole position, a clear view can be obtained of the surrounding country. To the north stretches the plain of the Woëvre, which some regard as a favourable ground for the display of that French skill in manœuvring which has won so many of their battles. Beyond the plain can be seen on the horizon some of the forts of the Metz position. There are nine principal forts in the Toul position besides St. Michel. As a German military writer once seriously proposed an infantry attack on this position "before the French were ready," the following description of one of these forts* and the obstacles outside it will show that no such surprise is possible :—

* Ardouin-Dumazet, *op cit.*

Near Villey le Sec, on a mamelon which has an altitude of 333 mètres, the map denotes that there is a fort. The village has a strange appearance; it half disappears behind a slope covered with shrubs and its approaches are covered with strange obstacles. For a breadth of 20 or 30 yards iron posts are planted in squares; between each post close to the ground a pointed iron stake about six inches high is concealed in the long grass; posts and stakes are attached by wire armed with teeth like artificial thorns; others hardly visible are drawn from post to post through the grass. A man who finds himself there will tear his coat and his skin, if he remains he will fall and be spitted on the stakes. All this zone of caltrops precedes a deep ditch flanked by caponnières, that is to say by salient angles from which the Hotchkiss guns will sweep the bottom of the ditch if the assailant reaches it. The walls of the ditch are protected in front by sharp edged railings provided with spear-like points turned downwards, the whole presenting a savage appearance that I cannot describe. Above all this appear emplacements for the artillery, cannon masked from the enemy's view. Finally, behind all, to the west a concrete fort completes the defence. It is a terrible collection of all that the military art has been able to conceive. And here there is nothing secret about it. The village sleeps peacefully within its enceinte, the roads pass at the borders of its ditch. This picturesque fortress is connected with the rest of the fortified camp by batteries and redoubts which the strategic railway serves. Some of these batteries are hardly visible at twenty paces, their cannon can be fired without their presence being even suspected. Between them shelters are dug out for the infantry.

The nine principal forts of the Toul position, besides St. Michel, may now be named. They are Villey le Sec, Côte-Barine, Ecrouvès, Brouley, Domgermain, Charmes la Côte, Blenod, Tillot, and Lucey, while the number of batteries and minor defences is practically countless. At Toul also are the fixed headquarters of the Aerostatic Corps; and this building, in which several balloons are always kept filled with gas and ready to issue forth to reconnoitre, forms an important adjunct to Fort St. Michel. A very considerable extension of the use of air machines is looked forward to with hopeful feelings by the French public. The permanent garrison of the Toul position is estimated at 12,000 men. As it stands it forms a really formidable obstacle in the path of the German invader. It could not very well be ignored, and the French repose great faith in its impregnability. Still, the Germans are not less confident that they can carry, not perhaps the main part of the Toul defences, but a sufficient number of its outer forts to enable them to reach Neufchateau. By so doing within the first week of the war they would seriously embarrass all the French plans for concentration, and

turn the rear of the defences on the line of the Meuse. The successful defence of all the points of the Toul position is essential to the preservation of the existing line of defence on France's eastern frontier.

VII. NANCY.

This last observation forms a suitable introduction for the important question of the fortification of Nancy. The city of Nancy is at the present time absolutely devoid of any defences. Moreover, not a fort or a battery intervenes between it and the German frontier at Vie and Chateau Salins, and that frontier is only twelve miles distant. On the other hand, Nancy is the headquarters of an army corps—the 20th—which was created specially for the mobile defence of the advanced border districts. Whether it would act in front of Nancy, endeavouring to save that city from foreign occupation, or retire into the forest of Haye after some minor encounters must largely depend on circumstances that cannot be foreseen, such as the character and direction of the German attack and the degree of rapidity with which the French mobilisation has been carried out. In any case the most optimistic French officer cannot feel any real doubt that in its present defenceless state, and on account of its nearness to the frontier, it would be impossible to cover or hold Nancy against the invaders, while the vain attempt to do so might entail defeats and disasters at the opening of the campaign. Yet it may be doubted whether any French commander would have the resolution to abandon the capital of Lorraine without a serious effort to defend it, and to retire his main army intact into the shelter of the Haye forest where, flanked by Forts Frouard and Pont St. Vincent, and with his rear secured by the Toul position, he could fight on the defensive with all the advantages in his favour.

Still, whatever prudence may dictate, the abandonment of Nancy, one of the most attractive and prosperous cities of France, must be a bitter pill. There are some who think that the presence of the French force in the Haye forest would make it untenable for the Germans; but that is not the opinion of those who know that the heights to the east

of the city, such as Amance and the hills overlooking the forest of Champenoux, provide excellent emplacements for the German batteries and their siege artillery. From the appreciation of this fact has arisen a demand, not dating from yesterday but going back more than twenty years, for the defence of Nancy by fortifying it as Verdun, Epinal and Belfort have been fortified. Between the years 1897 and 1900 the question was most keenly discussed, and at last it seemed to have been decided in the affirmative. But for some reason that has never been clear the project was allowed to again pass into abeyance, and nothing has since been done to revive it.

A very carefully prepared scheme was drawn up in 1899 for the defence of Nancy. It was proposed to construct five principal forts at (1) the wood of Montenoy; (2) Amance; (3) Cercueil; (4) Lenoncourt; and (5) Dombasle. These, with four minor forts and some batteries in the intervals, would have made Nancy secure. It was also pointed out that the creation of this new position would add immensely to the strength of the already existing one of Toul by completely covering the unfortified side of the Haye forest between Frouard and Pont St. Vincent. When on the nominal ground of expense the project for the defence of the entire position of Nancy was withdrawn, its advocates pleaded for at least the construction of two "forts d'arrêt" at Dombasle and Amance, which, with those existing at Frouard and Pont St. Vincent, would have provided a formidable quadrilateral, each covering some of the weak points of the other. This minor proposal was also ignored, so that not merely is Nancy left quite undefended, but Pont St. Vincent, the weak point in the Toul position regarded as a barrier to a German advance, is left on its own possibly inadequate resources to guard the easiest crossing of the Moselle.*

* It is obviously impossible to enter here into the details of the Nancy question, but the reader will find them in an admirable paper contributed by Commandant Josset to the "Journal des Sciences Militaires" for November, 1899.

CONCLUSION.

There are various minor matters of great interest in relation to the defence of the frontier, such as the carefully organised service of forest guards and guides held in readiness to join the different corps and divisions on mobilisation, to which reference might be made, but space forbids. The whole extent of the French defensive system on the eastern frontier has been briefly described, and with the diffidence of a civilian critic some weak points have been indicated. The defenceless condition of Nancy is an obvious blot. The line of the Côtes de Meuse and that also of the Faucilles could probably be pierced. Pont St. Vincent is entrusted with a task that may be beyond its strength. But even with these defects, if experience proves them to be so, France's fortified frontier from Belfort to Verdun, created by her engineers and artillerymen, remains a marvellous achievement that must give her own people good cause for satisfaction, and that cannot be refused the tribute of respectful admiration by the foreign observer.

If there is one serious flaw in the situation it is not to be found in the artificial defences, but in the numerical strength of the forces guarding them. Remembering the admitted and incontestable superior facilities of the Germans for carrying out their mobilisation, the permanent French garrison maintained in Lorraine must be pronounced too weak numerically for absolute security against surprise. The *entente* with England furnishes France with the opportunity of shifting some part of the large garrisons hitherto quartered in the Pas de Calais and also along the Belgian frontier to places on and nearer the eastern frontier. In this way the defect may be repaired without increased outlay or larger annual levies.

THE ENTENTE BETWEEN HOLLAND AND BELGIUM*

ONLY a short time ago it was the fashion to say that "little States had had their day and were doomed to disappear." It will not surprise many persons to hear that this opinion was one of German manufacture. It was a favourite thesis with Stein, and in more recent days Bismarck and Alvensleben have given frequent expression to the same sweeping statement. But so far the prediction has not been verified, as Europe is still dotted with the same interesting and numerous little States which were left it by the Congress of Vienna and the Conference of London. It is only in Germany itself that something of this result has been seen, for there the Prussian boa-constrictor has swallowed up minor kingdoms and duchies, and is still ready to repeat the process at the expense of Austria. There have been many important changes in Europe in the last fifty years, but, taken altogether, the little States have held their own very well.

This fact should certainly be gratifying to those of the Great Powers which, like England, have contributed to their preservation in the past, and which have a vital interest in their continued existence.

The two little States of Europe in which Englishmen are specially interested by ties of blood and past political action are Holland and Belgium, the old Netherlands, which occupy the greater part of the Continental shore opposite our Eastern coasts. It is not strictly correct, and it is even somewhat offensive, to call them "little," for by their intelligence, prosperity and enterprise, the twelve million Netherlanders are in the first rank of European

* *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1907.

nations. It is true that they are divided into two separate States, yet Holland, with five million people, ranks fourth and Belgium, with seven million people, ranks fifth among the trading nations of Europe. But taken together the commercial and industrial activity, judged by the trade returns,* of these twelve million Netherlanders, is almost as great as that of Germany, and proportionally to population greater than that of Great Britain. No English writer seems to have taken the trouble to make this discovery by the simple addition of their imports and exports, and by the use of a comparative table, but it is sufficient proof in its way to demonstrate that the term "little" is in no sense appropriate for two of the most hard-working and enterprising communities in the world. But they are divided, and that is an element of weakness that has suggested to thoughtful minds in both States the desirability of promoting a friendly *entente* which would form the basis for an alliance whenever any danger to the independence and integrity of these brother lands arose.

Nearly seven years ago I called attention in these pages to the need there was for Holland and Belgium to arrive at a common understanding about the most important of all national questions, the security and defence of their fatherlands, and to knit themselves together by friendly and fraternal ties. The question was then quite academic, but although there are still many difficulties in the path, it is impossible not to see the signs that it is entering upon a more definite and practical phase. Public opinion in both countries has been struck by the very obvious importance of the question, and after trifling with it in a timid and hesitating manner it looks as if it might now receive the popular approbation which is essential to its successful

* The figures for the year 1904 were :—

	Imports.	Exports.	Totals.
Holland	201,627,078	165,465,556	£367,092,634
Belgium	115,400,000	89,450,000	£204,850,000
Grand total			£571,942,634
Germany	336,000,000	260,176,211	£596,176,211
Great Britain ...	551,038,628	371,015,320	£922,053,948

consummation. The meeting of the Dutch-Belgian Commission now sitting at Brussels will furnish the proof.

But it is necessary to speak in this matter with a certain amount of care and caution, and it may be hoped that the advocates of an excellent design will show the tact and *savoir faire* required to bring a difficult and delicate undertaking to a successful issue. In Holland, where at first the proposal was regarded with some coolness and dislike, it has lately made more real progress than in Belgium. The explanation of this is not difficult. Holland is an independent State, that can make alliances as it pleases. Belgium is a guaranteed neutral State that is declared by some to be debarred from making any alliances at all. There is another difference. Holland has only danger to fear from one Power. Belgium has two powerful neighbours, and each may be an aggressor. There is yet another point of difference. Holland will always have some warning of any coming invasion; Belgium may only know of it when she has been actually invaded.

These weighty reasons explain why the movement for an *entente* with Holland is not regarded with entire approval by the Belgian Government, which finds the ebullition of some of the more impetuous advocates of a Dutch-Belgian alliance a little embarrassing. Staid officials in the Rue de la Loi may reasonably be slightly startled when they hear one section of the supporters of this alliance proclaim that it will be a serviceable weapon against Germany, and another section arguing at the same time that it is really directed against France. No wonder then that a douche of iced water is poured upon the proposal in Belgian official circles whenever the occasion offers. That would be done under any circumstances, but it is done with special energy at a moment when the Belgian Government relies on the goodwill and protection of both France and Germany for the preservation of the Congo Colony against, what is termed in Brussels, English rapacity.

Still, despite the disfavour with which the movement is viewed in official circles in Brussels, and more particularly at the present juncture, there can be little doubt that it will go on until it has achieved what is, after all,

a natural union, or rather combination, between two kindred peoples who have so much in common—even the desire to preserve untouched their national forms of government and their own dynasties.

At the present moment a mixed Commission of Belgian and Dutch commercial men, and luminaries in the worlds of industry and finance, has just been formed for the purpose of discussing commercial questions affecting the common interests of the two countries. These include such matters as railway tolls, equal scales of freight, canal navigation and the improvement of main waterways like the Meuse. No one can magnify a conference on such worldly material questions as these into a political cabal for the conclusion of a secret or public military alliance. Whatever official and political elements may be added, the composition of the Commission is in its essence commercial, the military caste, whether Dutch or Belgian, being conspicuous by its absence. There seems no reason in the world why anyone should take exception to its meeting, or why the Belgian Government should be nervous lest the character of the Commission might be misconstrued. Still through, perhaps, excessive timidity, it has washed its hands of the matter, withheld official countenance, and left the delegates to manage the affair as best they may be able. The Dutch Government, for reasons of a different kind, has acted in a similar manner, so that whatever else the mixed Dutch-Belgian Commission may be it is not an official creation.

What it may thus lose in dignity it gains in significance by the fact that, despite official discouragement, it has come into being through the free and spontaneous inclination of two neighbouring peoples who are of practically the same race, and who realise the importance of being united with regard to the course that ought to be followed by both in commercial matters of common interest. By this natural gravitation towards each other in matters that affect their worldly prosperity, the Dutch and Belgians are in some measure repairing the errors committed in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, when religious feuds and dynastic blunders separated the two peoples, and assigned them different destinies. Now that they are approaching

each other on a footing of absolute independence and absolute equality there is a better chance than ever of a really durable accord between them.

The subjects that the Commission is meeting to discuss are not likely to possess much interest for the great world outside the two States immediately concerned. They certainly do not provide any attractive fare for an essay in an English Review. But, on the other hand, we are under no restraint in treating the matter in its symptomatic aspect, and in dilating upon the important issues for the peace and security of Europe that may spring out of the friendly and confidential discussions between some of the most prominent representatives of the two States that have most to hope from peace, and most to fear from war. Rightly measured, a Dutch-Belgian *entente* is a far more practical step towards the preservation of European peace than a Hague Conference under the strictly limited conditions upon which the great Military Powers will alone consent to take part in its philosophical discussions.

Leopold, the first King of the Belgians, probably the wisest statesman of the nineteenth century, if his limited power and opportunities are taken into account, once said "the safety of Holland lies in Belgium." He meant that the neutrality of Belgium guaranteed by the Five Powers formed the bulwark of Dutch security against the aggressiveness of France, which was thought, in his day, to have a monopoly of that quality. But the danger with which not merely the two little States named, but England herself, are threatened to-day, is that Germany may at any moment decide to move westwards and crush the two peoples of the Netherlands before they have awoken to the danger. The temptation to Germany to establish her hegemony on the shores of the North Sea can even now scarcely be restrained, and in the present position of affairs I believe that her army would be in possession of Brussels before the Belgian army was ready to fire a shot, and the possession of Brussels within 48 hours of the Uhlans crossing the frontier into Limburg would entail the complete disorganisation of all Belgian measures for defence outside Antwerp. The political projects of Napoleon III. were always visionary and somewhat fantastical. Not so

those of the Prussian Headquarter Staff, who, in the words of their Imperial director, make plans to "ride over all their enemies." It is, therefore, as true to-day as it was fifty years ago, although a different subverter of Belgian independence is in question, that the "safety of Holland lies in Belgium," for Belgium overrun and occupied by a hostile force, Holland would be reduced to a state of helplessness that would be followed by an easy conquest.*

But if it is true that the independence of Belgium is essential to Holland, it is not less certain, under existing conditions, that the active co-operation of Holland is essential to Belgium for purposes of defence. With a clearly-defined understanding, if not formal agreement, to the effect that the two Powers will assist one another against aggression, the Prussian cavalry raid into Brabant from Dalheim would become too risky. The Dutch army occupying the flank of the line of advance through Limburg could not be ignored, and the German plan of campaign would thus have to be modified to the extent of adopting slower methods, and slower methods mean, in this case, time for the concentration of the Belgian forces, and for the arrival of assistance from France and England. In the same way, if an attack on Holland was substituted for one on Belgium, the opportunity would be afforded the Belgian army of carrying out a diversion in aid of its allies from the Liège position. The whole problem turns on the question of time. If the two States are allied, or if without an alliance they have concerted a common course of military defensive action, the problem of time is settled in their favour, and they will find themselves able to arrest the onward rush of the Germans. No matter how brief that arrest may prove, it will have served its purpose. The Belgians, who are a slow but stubborn race, as their assailants will find out, once the struggle has had time to warm their blood, will not be disorganised by the sudden onset and the loss of their capital. Their existing system of mobilisation will not have had the

* Holland will remember this fact too late if Germany prove the victor in the present war.

severe strain imposed upon it that would reveal its defects, and under which it would be only too likely to break down. The Dutch army can be concentrated for co-operation before the whole position is compromised. England and France would be hastening to their aid, and the Belgians would have the best of all reasons for rejoicing at not being taken wholly unawares, in the fact that a comparatively small part of their soil would be violated by the feet of a hostile army. The gallant Uhlans would not be riding *over* their corpses, for they would very soon be riding *back* whence they came.

The objections that have been raised to the execution of a definite convention between Belgium and Holland rest on the supposition that a "neutral" State cannot make a defensive alliance or conclude a military treaty with another Power. A brief examination of the facts of the case will show that if this view is not wholly fallacious it gives at least an incomplete description of the actual juridical as well as material facts of the situation. The obligation on a "neutral" State to defend itself is in no degree less imperative than on an ordinary free and unhampered State. Indeed, from some points of view, the obligation is greater, because it has contracted with its guarantors for the maintenance of its own "neutrality" and "independence." The mere presence and passage of a hostile force on its soil is a breach of its neutrality. It sins in its obligations to others by its weakness or its neglect to provide the proper safeguards of its own defence and security. The Belgian Government and people can be in no possible ambiguity on this point. They have been told it over and over again by the French authorities, as well as by the German, and I have no doubt by the English as well. They have been freely censured for neglecting their duty all round, and the consequences to themselves have been described without any regard for their susceptibilities.

The obligation to provide the means of its own effective defence being thus clearly established by the admission of its possible aggressors as well as defenders, how can the right be withheld from Belgium of concerting with outsiders common measures of mutual self-defence? That

right must exist in increased force with regard to a State like Holland, which is not among the five guarantors of Belgian independence, but which finds itself not merely menaced by the same perils as beset its southern and most intimate neighbour, but also vitally concerned in the maintenance of the *status quo* in Belgium. The objections which France and England would see in a Belgian-German alliance, or that Germany would see in at least a Franco-Belgian alliance, possess no force if brought to bear on a Dutch-Belgian convention. Either of the former pacts might fairly be represented as an offensive move, and as even a disturbance of the balance of power, but the last is essentially a defensive step which provides something towards the protection of two unoffending nations, constitutes a menace to nobody, and, so far as the intentions of the Five Powers which guarantee the position of Belgium are sincere, contributes to the easier and surer fulfilment of their own obligations. Even the most cynical statesman at Berlin could not take open exception to an arrangement which provided just as sure a preventive for the French coming down the Meuse as for the Germans proceeding up that river. Nor are there any valid reasons to debar the Belgian Government from signing a strictly defensive military convention with any Power other than one of the five signatories of the London Convention. A strictly defensive treaty would only give Belgium the same right of striking in her own defence after attack which she already possesses without any special treaty with Holland, or, I may add, with Switzerland or Denmark, for once the project of a league among the little States of Europe has been proved to be feasible, the idea must grow in favour among them all.

Having fully admitted the objections to any treaty between Belgium and her two more powerful neighbours who happen also to be guarantors of her independence and neutrality, a few observations may be permissible with regard to the responsibilities accepted by the whole of the Five Powers towards Belgium, singly or collectively. The circumstances under which the defence of Belgium will become a practical question of the day imply a breach of that guarantee by one of the signatory Powers. If all the

signatory Powers kept faith Belgium would be left alone, and would consequently be secure. She need not have fortresses, she need not have an army. But we live in a world of imperfection, and what has to be provided against is not the fulfilment but the breach of the guarantee. What, then, are the practical facts with which the Belgian nation and the Governments concerned have to deal? I will put the problem briefly and practically. There are five guaranteeing Powers. Of these two do not count. They are Austria and Russia. They can be eliminated from the problem. Of the remainder two, France and Germany, are under suspicion. Either may become an aggressor for its own ambitious ends or from motives of self-protection. The fifth Power alone is free from all suspicion, that is England. Is it not fair to conclude that she has rights of a somewhat different character from the other four Powers? Nothing in the previous action of England has betrayed an intention to assert these superior rights, but it does not follow that because a thing has never been done it will never be attempted. In the great crisis for Belgium of 1870 the British Government took the best possible action it could at that moment on behalf of that country. It made treaties with France and with Prussia binding it to join forces against the State that violated Belgian territory. In 1870 no better course could possibly have been adopted, but it would be simply ridiculous to repeat that procedure in the present position of European affairs. And why? No one can for a minute suppose that France has the least desire to add Belgium to its territory. Its aspirations point to the East and not to the North. On the other hand there is the most pronounced desire on the part of Germany to encroach to the north-west, and indeed, if German aspirations are to be gratified, expansion to the North Sea, including with it the command of the mouths of the Rhine, as well as the Meuse and the Scheldt, is essential to the realisation of the Pan-Germanic programme.

But all these elements of doubt and grounds of objection have no application in the case of England. We have no designs whatever on the Continent. The most ambitious of our statesmen has never suggested that we should

endeavour to obtain a new Calais in the Netherlands. It is absolutely certain that if an ambitious Minister ever suggested such a project the country would emphatically repudiate it. It is, therefore, evident that whatever danger may threaten Belgium, or indirectly the States which would suffer from a change in the position of that country, it would not come from the side of England. For the Belgian, therefore, the possibility of an English peril is non-existent. Does this carry with it a greater right in the direction of preparing effective measures for the fulfilment of the grave obligation which England accepted in common with the other signatory Powers, and which she alone has the desire and intention of carrying out in the spirit and the letter of the London Convention which assigned to Belgium its legal position among the nations of Europe? This is not the purely academic question that might appear from the form in which it is put. It has already been considered, and once at least a practical answer was supplied to it. We have stated what was done in 1870, but the steps that were taken in 1875 are more applicable to the present and the immediate future. They were not of the nature of agreements with two possible aggressors, but of a distinctly clear and practical character in the way of preparation and of Anglo-Belgian concert against the aggression of one particular Power. Our Government emphatically threw aside the mask, and sent its officers to Belgium to prepare for the joint defence of that country against German aggression, and what was done in 1875 can very well be repeated in 1907 or at any subsequent date.

The importance of this action as a precedent is obvious. England and Belgium did on one occasion lay down the lines of joint military action during peace, although the war cloud passed off so quickly that there was no need to make the definite military convention that must have followed had events taken a different course. There is consequently no reason whatever why Holland and Belgium should not discuss similar matters and arrive at a very clear understanding as to what should be done whenever they considered they were in peril of attack. For this reason the marked tendency of the two peoples of

the Netherlands to come together deserves watching and encouragement in this country, the State that is most vitally concerned in the preservation of these countries from absorption by a great military Power. If England were so blind and apathetic as to allow Germany to coerce these comparatively weak countries, or one of them, into the state of subjection in which Prussia now holds Bavaria or Saxony, she would have signed her own death warrant. Only a short time ago it seemed as if the reckless and improvident action of the British Government in regard to the Congo question was driving the Belgian people, as well as their Government, into the arms of Germany. But the frank and unqualified declaration, at the end of last Session of Sir Edward Grey* that "under no circumstances would England annex any part of the Congo State," and that she "would welcome Belgium's acquisition of that colony," worked a marvellous change, and arrested that bitter tide of unpopularity which threatened the English name among our nearest and hitherto most attached neighbours.

As practical men we have to consider a little calmly as to the ways and means available for the fulfilment of our pledges, and as to how we are to safeguard our own vital interests in the Netherlands. We are bound in honour and by our historical policy for centuries to defend Belgium. To attain that end with the minimum of effort and the maximum of result the co-operation, hearty and unreserved, of the Belgian people is essential. There would seem to follow as a natural consequence the observation of some regard for Belgian susceptibilities. No one can say that much heed has been paid to this side of the question for some time past. A paper war has been in progress during the last few years, in which Belgians have been painted in very unattractive colours, and very little oppor-

* Sir Edward Grey has rendered many great and patriotic services to his country. Among the greatest of them was this, that he first stemmed the tide of Belgian detraction on this occasion (1906). On 4th of August, 1914, he saved the honour of England, and became the direct successor of Palmerston. Some day or other this story will be told, and then his countrymen will know how one straight brave man rode superior to a whole Ministry of shufflers.

tunity for their self-vindication has been allowed them. It is sufficient to record here the opinion that the anti-Congo agitation did for a time seriously threaten the harmony of Anglo-Belgian relations, and to recognise the satisfaction with which all close watchers of the situation in Western Europe, Frenchmen as well as Englishmen, are now noting that that agitation is on the wane, and that a juster view of Belgian colonising efforts is coming into vogue.

If the good feeling and hearty co-operation of the Belgians themselves are the first elements required for the successful discharge of the duties we accepted for the sake of our own security, as well as of that of Belgium, we are bound to welcome every auxiliary that comes in to assist our efforts and the attainment of our ends. No auxiliary could be more welcome to us than Dutch co-operation in the defence of the integrity and independence of Belgium. It would be welcome to us if it were only to be regarded as a perpetuation of our ancient historic alliance, as continuing in a new century the tradition of combined effort which was not the least of the creative forces in this old Europe. But it would have a more practical value still. Dutch co-operation means the concentration of all the forces of the Netherlands for the common defence, and the final disappearance of the old disunion and division that so often in the past hampered the efforts of all the Allies in the field and the Cabinet. It would signify also that Holland had shaken off the soporific of German schemers who have represented that to be merged in the great German Empire was a happier fate than the preservation of their independence by the men who have been nurtured on the traditions of William the Silent. From our point of view nothing could be more welcome than the news that Holland and Belgium had come cordially together and agreed that, having many interests in common and occupying the most exposed position in Western Europe, they had decided, without offence to anyone, to defend their rights, independence and national existence against all or any who menaced them. There is little or no doubt that, although the declaration will not possess the validity and weight it

would have if it emanated from the two Governments, the Dutch-Belgian Commission will not separate before passing a resolution to that effect, and certainly we in England ought to do everything we can to encourage this movement, and to inspire both the Dutch and the Belgians with the absolute conviction that the ægis of England is raised resolutely and unflinchingly over the Netherlands.

THE MENACE OF ELSENBORN*

WHEN the late General Brialmont twenty years ago was advocating his new system for the defence of the passages of the Meuse at Namur and Liège in the teeth of sluggish Belgian opinion—still sluggish, I must add, on the military position of their country—one of his most forcible arguments in the case of Liège was that the forts to be constructed on his projected perimeter round that city would command all the roads leading from Germany into Belgium. It is scarcely necessary to say that the statement of this distinguished military engineer, whose name will be linked with that of Vauban when his works have been subjected to the test of war, was perfectly accurate at the time it was made. But it is so no longer, and it is truly extraordinary how French and Belgian opinions have remained indifferent to the changed position that has been subtly brought about by the patient and persistent plans of the Berlin Headquarters Staff on the undefended portion of the eastern Belgian frontier in the first place, and with regard to the uncovered northern French frontier in the second.

Twelve years ago French military circles were a little startled by a sudden announcement that the Germans were establishing a new camp at Malmédy, close to the Belgian frontier at Stavelot. The possibilities of such a camp as affording a base for a dash across the Ardennes to Sedan were at once realised by military authorities in Paris, and several alarmist articles were published on the subject in the Army journals. The German Government hastened to give tranquillising assurances. The new camp, it was stated in the first place, was not to be at Malmédy, but at a spot on the wild moorland forming part of the Hohe

* *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1908.

Venn, ten miles to the north-east of the old Walloon town, and two miles and a half west of the townlet of Elsenborn. It required some careful study of military maps to fix its exact position, and when it was seen that the only means of reaching it by rail was by the light railway to Hellenthal—14 miles east of the camp—which was itself but a branch line from Call, a station on the comparatively unimportant railways from Cologne and Bonn to the Eiffel, its importance did not appear very capital or to furnish much justification for alarm.

Taking advantage of these circumstances the German military papers and responsible writers proceeded to give what are called friendly explanations for the purpose of removing all ground for suspicion from the minds of the French. They declared that the Elsenborn camp was a very small and tentative enterprise to which no importance ought to be attached. The German Government had selected it as a place for making artillery experiments because the region was barren, remote from towns, and with, practically speaking, no inhabitants. Moreover, only a small number of troops were to be quartered there, and those in temporary barracks. As a further tranquillising measure French officers were invited to come and see the place for themselves, and some of them, as a matter of fact, went. They could only corroborate the German statements of the moment, whatever reservations they may have made about the possible development of the camp in the future. That development has now taken place, as I found during a recent visit to Elsenborn, and the importance of the place can no longer be concealed. The harmless and inoffensive camp, as it was termed in its infancy, is rapidly being converted into a formidable menace to its neighbours, and its mission has to be seriously studied by the careful student of the present military position in Western Europe.

Before dealing with the camp itself a brief account of the change that has taken place in its accessibility will be instructive. The light railway to the east of the position still stops at Hellenthal, and there is apparently no intention of undertaking the expensive work of continuing it through difficult country to Elsenborn. Nor is it necessary,

for Elsenborn camp is now in direct communication with the general railway system of Germany. West of the camp and parallel with the Belgian frontier now runs the permanent double railed line from Aix-la-Chapelle to St. Vith passing through, among other stations, Weismes and Sourbrodt. These places are named because Weismes is the junction for the light railway to Malmédy, and Sourbrodt is the station for the camp at Elsenborn. This railway does not stop at St. Vith; it continues southward to Trois Vierges, where it connects with the railway system of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. The Belgian line from Pepinster and Spa, as well as its branch serving the Amblève valley west of Trois Ponts, also joins the Luxemburg system at Trois Vierges. A few miles north of Trois Vierges is the important Belgian junction of Gouvy, where there is a main line in a south-westerly direction to Libramont and Bertrix, two other Belgian junctions of prime importance. Libramont is a junction on the main line from Brussels to Metz and Alsace, and Bertrix, only ten miles from France, may be taken as the central point of the line running more or less parallel with the northern frontier of France from the Meuse at Dinant to the Grand Duchy.

The reader will therefore see at a glance that the camp at Elsenborn, whatever other significance it may have or not, can no longer be described as inaccessible. The Aix-la-Chapelle to St. Vith line is a permanent way, admirably constructed, with heavy rolling stock and express trains which perform the journey of fifty odd miles in a little over an hour. I know the line very well between Weismes and Kalter Herberg, one of the two stations for that picturesque old relic of mediævalism the town of Montjoie, whose name recalls the battle-cry of the Kings of France. For the special matter we are considering the most important station on the line is Sourbrodt, 1,860 feet above sea level, and the highest point on the line. The camp of Elsenborn lies rather more than two miles east of this station, and in addition to a fine metalled road a tramway for the conveyance of stores, ammunition, and building material has been laid down alongside the road, and establishes steam communication, rigidly reserved for the military, between a siding at Sourbrodt and the interior

of the camp. The road from Elsenborn itself to Butgenbach and Weismes—which does not pass through Sourbrodt—has also been levelled and metalled for the rapid passage of troops, and especially of artillery. There is consequently access to the camp of Elsenborn from several sides, and it can consequently no longer be described as occupying a remote spot difficult to approach or leave, or as being quite detached from the other advanced bases of the Germany army.

Even if there were no other facts to go upon it might be safely assumed from this improvement in the means of communication with Elsenborn that the camp had not remained in the same embryonic state as when the French officers visited it in 1897. As a matter of fact, it has acquired a very special importance, and its secrets are sufficiently valuable to be kept carefully guarded from the outer world. A brief description of the camp as it presents itself to-day from an outside view may best serve to bring the scene before the eyes of the reader.

Lying astride of the main direct road from Sourbrodt to Elsenborn the position is screened very skilfully by a number of small fir plantations, and at only one point is it possible to obtain what may be called a general view of the camp, and even here the spectator has space only for a glimpse rather than a close scrutiny. Still, it is the best that can be accomplished, for, having established their camp on either side of the road, the next step taken by the German military authorities was to close that road to traffic and to make it the central street of the encampment reserved for the troops and rigorously guarded at all points by sentries.

The road to the camp leads almost due east from the station at Sourbrodt, and gradually ascends to an altitude of 2,000 feet at its highest point, which is marked by the Hotel-Mess on one side of the road, and the villa-residence of the Camp Commandant on the other. The first indications of a military position are, however, revealed to the visitor or traveller approaching the camp before reaching this point. After passing the first fir plantations on the left of the road the full expanse of the heath or common which ends in the artillery practice ground comes into view,

and amid the bracken are visible the fenced-off low buildings that denote ammunition-magazines and store-houses for high explosives. All these are carefully guarded by sentries, and the few paths across the heath are also "prohibirt." A few hundred yards further on are the only civilian residences in the whole place, the Hotel mentioned and two photograph shops, or sheds. Then succeed a few lines of huts, the guardhouse, and the sentry box, where stands the vigilant sentry to prevent any civilian or stranger entering the camp. The road to Elsenborn turns to the right and skirts the camp, and it may be mentioned that in contrast with the fine road reserved for the military this is a mere track, rut-scored and resembling the approach to a farm-yard, which no one who had once used it would care to traverse a second time. Still this *détour* enables the visitor to get an idea of the size of the camp by measuring its southern side. This is over 1,200 yards in length, and while the camp is screened by a thick plantation inside a fence of barbed wire, it is none the less possible to count ten rows of low barrel-shaped buildings, and in each row twenty of them. These buildings in zinc or sheet iron are called *baraques*—small barracks—and each is capable of accommodating 50 men. On the south side of the central street to which the innocent traveller is denied access there are consequently 200 *baraques* with accommodation for 10,000 men.

Up to this point it is not possible to obtain even a glimpse of what is on the north side of the camp. On reaching the eastern end of the southern boundary the road joins the one that has passed through the camp, and must once more be described as excellent. This is only natural, for it provides the line of communication with Elsenborn and Hellenthal. Again fir plantations have been introduced to intercept the view, but it is at this very point that something can be seen of the northern half of the camp. On the right and in a field slightly raised above the road is a cavalry encampment, the *baraques* here being not in sheet iron but in stout brown canvas. At the moment when I saw it the regiment happened to be out at practice on the moor, and on mounting the bank at the side of the road I found that a clear view could be obtained of the whole extent of the

camp. The northern side slopes downwards from the central road, and while the breadth from west to east of the enclosed camp is 1,200 yards the depth from south to north is certainly more than a mile. More rows of zinc baraqucs similar to those described are visible, and without exaggeration there are quite as many on the northern side as on the southern. In addition there are several ranges of brick buildings, which are probably the artillery barracks, and further on another brown canvas camp lies in the hollow for the accommodation of the second cavalry regiment included in the permanent garrison of Elsenborn.

Elsenborn camp is therefore composed of a minimum number of 400 zinc baraqucs, two cavalry camps, a range of buildings for artillery, besides the lines of huts and other buildings included in what may be called the outer and less concealed area of the camp, that is to say, before the wire fence and hedge and the vigilant sentries are reached. Somewhere in the camp, too, is an aerostatic station and gasometer for inflating balloons. The zinc baraqucs were cited as proof ten years ago that the camp was only experimental and unimportant. They are still there and in excellent condition, but the extensive building of more substantial quarters for the troops is now in progress. New red bricks in large quantities are being conveyed into the camp daily by trucks on the tramway and by carts along the roads, and these, I can aver, are being utilised for some buildings in the northern or concealed portion of the camp. In the course of one hour the train passed under my view three times with one or two trucks laden with bricks, and the probability seems to be that the brick barracks are an addition to the dimensions of the camp and not a substitution for the baraqucs.

With regard to the garrison permanently quartered here it is difficult to speak with positive assurance, but there are certainly two cavalry regiments, one of Cuirassiers and the other of Hussars. There are also two infantry regiments. But the strongest arm of all is the artillery and its three branches, viz., horse, field and siege or fortress, are all represented. The due complement of engineers and train is not wanting, so that the force at Elsenborn is one

fully equipped to take the field at an hour's notice. As to its strength there can never be less than 8,000 men in the camp, and its present dimensions are equal to the accommodation of a force of at least three times that number. Besides the unoccupied portion of the heath is available for an improvised encampment, and quite a hundred thousand men could be collected and kept there without the least difficulty.

It will, therefore, be clear that the camp at Elsenborn can no longer be described as a place of little importance, seeing how much it has developed in the last few years, and what energetic steps are being taken at the present moment to add to its size and resources. It is also the scene of extensive artillery exercises and of important experiments with high explosives for siege purposes, which are held on the ranges of hills bounding the northern horizon looking northwards from the Sourbrodt road towards Kalter Herberg. A considerable number of the artillery and engineer officers, for whom there is not sufficient accommodation in the camp itself, reside at Montjoie, from which the artillery ranges and practice ground are not very distant. It will thus be evident that the importance of the camp is considerably augmented by the sections which, for one reason or another, lie outside the mile square within the chain fence. Even at its most moderate computation the German force always at Elsenborn is considerably greater, for instance, than that portion of the Belgian army which has to guard the twelve important forts round Liège.

What, then, is the real motive of the German military authorities in keeping a strong mobile force at Elsenborn? It cannot be for defensive purposes. No one has ever credited a French general with the design of losing himself and his army in the Eiffel or the Hohe Venn. If the French ever came down the Meuse they would strike direct at Aix-la-Chapelle and nothing south of it. We are forced, then, to conclude that it can only be with an offensive object that this corps is kept in a position so close to the main roads traversing the Belgian Ardennes, and if further proof were needed, it would be afforded by the fact that the cavalry force stationed there has been so largely

increased of recent years. In 1897 three or four squadrons were considered sufficient for picket duty, but in 1907 two complete cavalry regiments are kept permanently stationed in this camp which, if we are to believe the official story, is "exclusively reserved for rifle and cannon practice."

The offensive movement that the German War Directors have in view can only be an advance along the excellent roads passing through Malmédy and Ligneuville to the Belgian towns of Stavelot and Viel-Salm respectively. Both these places are on the Belgian railway already mentioned to Gouvy, from which place there is, in addition to the railway, an excellent main road to Bastogne and Libramont. The German cavalry, aided by their horse artillery, would have no difficulty in seizing the important junction at Libramont the same day as the trumpets sounded the advance from Elsenborn. Neither the French nor the Belgians could anticipate them, and, having accomplished that much and secured the control of the railways in their rear—for Malmédy, the head of their line in Germany, is only four miles distant from the station at Stavelot—reinforcements of field artillery and infantry would easily reach the mounted force within twenty-four hours of its arrival at Libramont, and, in face of that successful feat, it would be perilous, if not impossible, for the French, who have a considerable cavalry force at Sedan, to attempt any advance beyond Bouillon or, at the farthest, Bertrix. It will thus be clear that the first stage in the probably inevitable decision to make the Belgian Ardennes the scene of hostilities must be, under present conditions, a complete and facile success for the Germans.

There are still many people who believe that a campaign in the Ardennes would be attended by some of the difficulties and disadvantages which the French armies experienced in the campaigns of 1793-8. But this view is quite mistaken. The impenetrable forests have almost completely disappeared; Napoleon himself began the work of demolition by requisitioning the oaks for the Boulogne flotilla. The process has been going on, more or less, ever since, and although there are still beautiful woods and

numerous fresh plantations, under the Belgian law, in the Ardennes, the greater part of the region consists of open, undulating country, traversed by some of the finest roads to be found in Europe. As an instance of this, it may be mentioned that at the same time as the cavalry force made sure of the junction at Libramont, another detachment moving from Viel-Salm by the admirable mail-post road which crosses the Baraque de Fraiture, 1,900 feet above sea level, the second highest point in Belgium, could occupy La Roche and the table-land of Nassogne, the possession of which carries with it the command of the whole of the central and eastern Ardennes. It is unnecessary to enlarge more upon this theme. Enough has been said to show that the Germans hope to secure no slight advantages by an offensive forward movement from Elsenborn whenever the inevitable war with their principal neighbour breaks out.

But, it will be asked, what would Belgium do in face of this flagrant invasion of her territory? In the first place, she could, so long as her position remains as at present, do nothing, for the confident declaration by General Brialmont in 1888 that the guns of the forts at Liége commanded "all the roads leading out of Germany" is no longer true, the camp at Elsenborn having turned the formidable position of Liége, and created an entirely new situation. The only garrison kept by Belgium in the Ardennes is stationed at Arlon, thirty miles south of Libramont, and close to the frontier of the Grand Duchy. The occupation of Libramont by the force described would entail the immediate surrender of the troops at Arlon, as all their communications would have been cut off. For the purpose of being absolutely explicit on the subject, it may be stated that Arlon is the garrison town of the 10th Regiment of the Line, which represents exactly one-nineteenth part of the total infantry of the Belgian army. As it is the *depôt* and rallying place for the reserves of that regiment, the success of the German advance to Libramont would carry with it, without a shot being fired, the disappearance, practically speaking, of that proportion of the small Belgian army. As a matter of fact, the retention of a garrison at Arlon is a grave strategical fault on the part of the Belgian War Department. Any force at Arlon at

all can have no practical value for defensive purposes, and on an invasion of Belgium from the east, nothing whatever could be done to save it from destruction in the military sense. Arlon was a useful place to garrison in 1831-8, while it was still uncertain whether the Powers would allow the Belgians to absorb or not their brother people in Luxemburg, but since the neutralisation of that State in 1867, the place has been useless for military purposes, and, still worse, it forms a regular trap under certain clearly recognised and long-foreseen contingencies.

As the Belgian Government owes it not only to itself, but to the guaranteeing Powers, of which, as I have shown in several preceding articles in this Review, England is the only one it can implicitly trust, to neglect no precautions whatever for the defence of the country, mistakes of this nature are truly culpable. Consequently, it may be said that, in omitting to adopt some precautions at the time of, or since, the formation of the camp at Elsenborn, Belgium neglected to discharge its proper duties. The Belgian apologist may reply in helpless tones, "What could we do?" One answer to the plea is clear and irrefutable. It could have abandoned Arlon as a garrison town, and transferred the regiment there to, let me suggest, Bastogne or the neighbourhood of Rochefort. There is no reason why it should not now make the change. In the worst case, if this body of troops could not stop or retard the invader, it would not be difficult at least to save the regiment by withdrawing it within the fortified position of Namur. While the danger of keeping a regiment of infantry at Arlon is the most striking proof of improvident carelessness, it must be stated that the whole disposition of the Belgian army is defective. It remains exactly as it was prior to 1870, when the larger portion of the mobile troops were kept on the south-west frontier to oppose an advance by France, which was the old nightmare in Brussels. But the situation to-day is the exact opposite of what it was in the time of Napoleon III. There is not the remotest risk of the French moving on Brussels or advancing either through Hainaut or Flanders. If, for any reason, they did move into Belgium, the advance would certainly be either down the Meuse to Namur, or across the Ardennes

to Liège and Aix-la-Chapelle. Yet Ypres, Tournai, Mons, and Charleroi are all heavily garrisoned, considering the smallness of the Belgian army. Behind the places named there are regiments of cavalry and infantry at both Bruges and Ghent, which could be placed in a few hours alongside the regiments in garrison there. That was an excellent system when no one knew from one week to another what foolish enterprise Napoleon III. might not take up. But it is quite out of date and an anachronism at the present time. It is still worse; it gives German aggressiveness an undue advantage and a direct encouragement, whilst it places France at a considerable disadvantage.

When the quite undefended position of the Ardennes is borne in mind, this faulty distribution of Belgian troops for the defence of Belgian territory betrays a remarkable and culpable negligence on the part of the Brussels War Department. When the same authorities protest that they are helpless to do anything to avert or counterbalance the menace of Elsenborn, their excuse is invalidated by the fact that four of the cavalry regiments now quartered in Hainaut and Flanders would supply a mobile force for the defence of the Ardennes against such a raid as has been sketched. The Germans could not possibly ignore the presence of such a force. In making the necessary transfer of garrisons, the Belgian Government would, of course, be put to the expense of building new barracks, but land is cheap in the Ardennes, and Rochefort, Bastogne, Ciney, and Libramont would make excellent cavalry stations with a couple of batteries of horse artillery thrown in at La Roche and St. Hubert. These suggestions, which are made by one to whom the Belgian Ardennes are as familiar ground as Surrey, and which are of a simple and practical character, will show the reader that in the writer's mind the duty devolves on Belgium of taking steps without delay to nullify the menace that the German camp at Elsenborn presents for the security of her territory and the preservation of her neutrality. There is still in all probability a sufficient margin of time left before the outbreak of a great war in Western Europe to allow of these simple precautions being put into execution. It is the absolutely undefended state of the Belgian Ardennes—that is to say

the whole of the province of Luxemburg, and the greater portions of the provinces of Namur and Liège (south of the Meuse)—which offers so tempting and probably, in the result, so irresistible an inducement to convert them into the battleground for the next European war. That state of defencelessness is a typical instance of the remissness or improvidence with which the Belgians fail to attend to the vital question of their own national security.

As a matter of fact, the Belgian Government has always required stimulating by its friends to keep it up to the level of its responsibilities in military matters. The French Government has been somewhat backward in respect of friendly remonstrances at Brussels, believing, perhaps too implicitly, that the sympathies of the Belgian people were wholly with France, and that an incursion on the part of the Germans would only entail the adhesion of the Belgians *en masse* to her side. Since the declaration of the Entente Cordiale, too, the French Government, out of pure delicacy of feeling towards this country, has been more than ever averse to remonstrate at Brussels as to Belgian neglect in taking proper precautions. It assumes that this is primarily a matter for England, who is pledged to the lips to maintain Belgian independence. But, unfortunately, English advice and English remonstrances do not carry the great weight which ought to attach to them at Brussels, where there is a deep and spreading feeling of resentment at the English treatment of the Congo question. I say it with regret that English advice there at this juncture produces rather the opposite effect to what it aims at accomplishing. Instead of leading the Belgian authorities to undertake or sanction what is recommended, it seemingly confirms their inaction, and even sometimes impels them to take action of a contradictory order. France, therefore, is leaning on a broken reed if she thinks that English influence at Brussels, which I declare to be nil, and for the moment a figment of the imagination based on tradition, will avail to induce the Belgian authorities to organise their defence *as against Germany*. France still has influence there, although it is waning as the consequence of her political association with England, and she

will be wise to use it without delay and without reference to London, so as to secure a more equitable distribution of the Belgian garrisons, and a more effective system of defending the roads across the Ardennes, and especially the great main route through Gouvy, Libramont, and Bertrix, which leads to the undefended northern section of the French frontier, the Achilles-heel of France.

Without believing in the literal accuracy of the statement that a secret offensive and defensive treaty has for some time existed between Belgium and Germany, I have reason to know that the relations between *the Governments* of the little State and the big Power have long been most cordial, and I do not think it would require twenty-four hours to conclude and sign a treaty of that purport, not secretly, but openly. Nothing, in my opinion, can avert this contingency but prompt and energetic steps by the French Government in Brussels and also in London to bring about a clearing of the cloudy atmosphere in Anglo-Belgian relations. France may well see good ground for anxiety in the almost ostentatious neglect of Belgium to provide against the menace of Elsenborn. But if that neglect is not merely ostentatious, but intentional, how much more reason is there for French statesmanship to be vigorously self-assertive, and is there not some good reason for thinking that this may be the case in the truly extraordinary plan for diverting the main railway from Germany from its existing track through Verviers and Liège to a new route leading directly west from Welkenraedt, and passing to the north of Liège? It is certainly true that the proposed track would be more or less under the fire of one or two of the forts on the northern side of the Liège perimeter, but the existing line is so completely at the mercy of Fort Chaudfontaine (which is practically impregnable) that it could never be utilised by an invading force. To place improved railway facilities, as will be done by the Welkenraedt-Louvain direct line, at the disposal of the conjectural invader, for whom, by neglect to improvise a proper defence, the whole of the Ardennes has been left alluringly open, is certainly an indication of how the wind blows at Brussels. While our God-granted statesmen have been indulging in free denunciations of the

Belgian King and his officials with regard to the Congo question, there is too much reason in my mind to apprehend that by way of revenge that King and his government are laying the seeds of a cordial alliance with Germany which will exercise a profound and durable influence on the fate of Western Europe, and it can only be one to the detriment of France as well as of England.

THE PEACE OF EUROPE*

DESPITE Hague Conferences and Temples of Peace the international situation in this old continent of ours remains strained, and those who care to listen can hear below the surface the rumblings of disagreement, menace, and strife which, since the collapse of the Tower of Babel, have marked the history of the relations between man and his brother-man. The rumblings are not the less minatory because every one is so intent on smothering their sound, or declaring that they exist merely in the imagination of alarmists.

In at least three distinct parts of what may be called the European battle-ground, they are caused by seismological disturbances that may at any moment provoke a vast and incalculable human cataclysm. For those who prefer to confront the unpleasant truth instead of taking to their bosom the pleasing comfort of unreal fiction, the following investigation of the bases on which the relations of the European Powers rest at the present time will not be without interest, and may furnish some material for grave reflection.

Although the details vary, although many dislocations of old power and many attributions of new power have to be noted, the present situation of Europe is very much the same in essentials as it has been at any time during the three or four centuries that have passed since feudal and mediæval strife gave place to the struggles due to national impulses or the ambitions of statesmen and sovereigns with which what may be called modern policy was inaugurated. England, ever anxious of her hold upon the sea and ever dreaming of hostile Armadas, clings to and gropes for the maintenance of "the Balance of Power." The great

* *United Service Magazine*, July, 1908.

military State of the Continent, now Germany where formerly stood France, wants to smite its neighbours hip and thigh, so that they may no longer bar the way to the effort that shall do for England on the sea what the Spanish Armada did not. The Power dispossessed not merely of its ancient military pre-eminence but of much of its cherished territory, now France where once it was Germany, ponders on revenge and recovery, but grown prudent, and still smarting from its wounds, stands vigilant, watching for the coming of the inevitable collision between Briton and Teuton. These still are the three giants of Europe, great in their national characteristics, their material resources, and their pride of race. In comparison with them all the other States east of the Atlantic combined have only a secondary and relative importance. France pines for the recovery if not the restitution of what she has lost; Germany toils for world-wide expansion based on the robbery of what England has won; England, aroused and alarmed at the menace, is meditating whether prudence bids her merely rivet her panoply or by one supreme effort strike her rival low.

No one can seriously dispute the existence of these three overmastering national movements set in force by inexorable and inscrutable destiny. Yet we are assured that the peace of Europe is secure, and that it is only we insignificant interpreters of the times who are the mischief-makers, war-mongers and alarmists, that would set the world by the ears, and without whose intervention the millennium would arrive, and the lion would lie down by the lamb! This view is circulated and emphasised by those who are interested in the preservation of the belief in shams, and whose plans are threatened by the early discovery of their true nature and purpose. Germans, being the aggressive force to-day in international politics everywhere, are especially thin-skinned, and sensitive as to divulgations of their plotting.

Let us then turn to the consideration calmly and dispassionately of the great problem that confronts us, and let us endeavour to bring forth the essential factors in the situation rather than the minor contributories.

What has for some time been the predominating fact in

the European situation? No one can dispute that it has been the desire, nay the determination, of Germany, under the Prussian ægis be it well understood, not to be isolated. Twelve months ago it really looked as if that much-to-be-desired result in the interests of the world's peace was almost achieved, but the scene has since changed. Berlin has laboured assiduously in the interval, and there has not merely disappeared the possibility of Germany being isolated, but there has arisen the new possibility that on *certain* questions she may not improbably find such supporters as to leave it doubtful on which side of the European dividing line the real superiority of power lies. In the interval she has administered a soporific to England not merely by the German Emperor's visit, which lulled our suspicions at a critical moment, but also by means of a carefully organised Press campaign.

But she has done a great deal more tangible work than this. She has strengthened her alliance with Austria by skilfully bringing into evidence the opposition of Anti-German Powers to the legitimate and inevitable expansion of Austria towards the Ægean. She has strengthened her position in Holland, where a German prince must sooner or later reign. She has won over a staunch ally in Sweden, alienated by the senseless folly of detaching Norway from her—to which England mainly contributed—the greatest political blunder of the dawning century. Finally, she has got the whole of the administrative and commercial classes of Belgium at her disposal through the short-sighted and intemperate anti-Congo policy of England, which has uprooted the old Belgian trust in her. If to these new or strengthened alliances we add the blind devotion of the Sultan of Turkey, controlling an army which is not the least efficient in the world, we have an array of forces which, on land at least, might well make a bold bid for the hegemony of Europe.

If it is asked how this remarkable change has been brought about in a short year, the answer can be given in a sentence. It is through the blundering of the British Government. Instead of looking plain facts in the face, it has indulged in the costly pastime of giving free reins to the sentimental, and it has heedlessly passed by the

practical and left it far behind and outside its reach. It has certainly the Entente Cordiale with France, but so nebulous an arrangement, worked by men who indulge in private correspondence with Kaiser Wilhelm, can scarcely relieve the French nation from all its ever-present and pressing anxiety. It has an agreement with Russia, but Russia in her present state would have but a poor chance against the well-trained legions of the two Powers of Central Europe. There remains, indeed, Italy, a titular member still of the Triple Alliance yet opposed to Austria in the Balkan peninsula, and for that reason if for no other more likely to desert than to join her allies; but on the field of Mars, Italy may count for less than the charitably disposed attribute to her. While events are tending in this direction the British Government, blindly indifferent to facts, is approaching one of the powder magazines of Europe with a lighted match, and if it be true that Russia has promised her support with regard to Sir Edward Grey's proposals for Macedonia, the hour of explosion must be close at hand.

The two most obvious purposes that any British Government should set before itself in its Continental action are the retention of the cordial good-will and trust of the two peoples of the Netherlands on the one hand, and the encouraging of the anti-Prussian forces that exist at Vienna on the other. It is as clear as the noon-day sun that in the present crippled condition of Russia the balance of power in Europe rests in the hands of Austria. It is also scarcely less clear that if England is to help France on land against superior forces which will crush her without that help, her only available avenue for striking in with timely and effective aid runs through Belgium.

England's two main interests, therefore, are so palpably clear that it would seem incredible, if it were not happening, how she could go wilfully and wantonly out of her way to injure her own position in those states, and to create difficulties that should never have been allowed to arise. The anti-Congo policy at the expense of Belgium is now to be matched and surpassed by an anti-Austrian policy at the expense of Prussia's half-consenting, half-reluctant ally in Vienna. Just as we have alienated the Belgians,

and pushed them into the welcoming arms of Germany, which is a plain disservice to France, so are we now driving the Austrian Government to swallow all its own private qualms and misgivings through a greater fear and sense of irritation, and to realise that it has no choice save to rely on its Prussian partner.

The unfortunate part of the matter is, that once Austria takes the final step committing her in the Balkan peninsula to the policy engineered from Berlin, there will be no going back for her. She will have finally taken her place in the Pan-Germanic expansion league that has been the ideal of Berlin for so many years, and her own special idiosyncrasies will be merged in those of the more vigorous political entity that will at last have moulded her to its will. The non-German elements in the Dual Empire, moreover, will be deprived of even their desire to oppose this tendency when they see that the way is being barred to their legitimate and necessary expansion southwards by the sympathisers with the worthless elements in the Macedonian province. The sure way to stifle the disinclination of Magyar and Czek to coalesce with the German, is to close the door to Austria in the Balkans and to represent that Italy has valid rights on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Yet English policy at the present moment is riding full tilt for a collision with Austria. The deep-rooted opposition of the Emperor Francis Joseph to quarrelling and strife of all kinds, and the general desire of the Powers to respect the wishes of the venerable monarch, may retard the revelation of the change that has taken place in Baron Aehrenthal's policy since he assumed office, but it does not diminish or weaken the force of the change itself. The pro-Russian statesman has by the force of circumstances been converted into the temporary if not the permanent auxiliary of Prussia.

If we turn to Germany herself, we see a vigorous process of Germanification at work in the east and west of the Empire. In Poland the process has been going on for some years, and although Polish vitality is strong it is not at all clear that it will survive the sapping, pressure, and coercion that have been brought to bear upon it. Prussian Poland is of comparatively small dimensions, and has not

the density of population that belongs to the other fragments of the old kingdom that fell to Russia and Austria. Given the necessary time, the Teutonising of the Poles subject to the Hohenzollern is one of those processes that, although they do not amalgamate races or unite hearts, stifle opposition and attain the practical ends of Government.

While this experimental fusing is still in the crucible Prussia has taken up a similar task in the extreme west of her territory where, after an interval of nearly forty years, she has suddenly become alive to the fact that the people of Alsace-Lorraine are still at heart as French as on the day of their separation. The weapon to which the Prussians have had recourse is the compulsory use of the German tongue. They argue that a common language is the hammer that welds peoples, when in the molten stage, together. They have employed it, not without success, in the Walloon districts of Malmédy and St. Vith in the northern Eiffel (where a charming people are afraid to express themselves in their mother tongue beyond their doorsteps), and they hope to succeed as well in the towns and villages of Alsace. For a long time they hoped and believed that the lapse of a few years would bring the Alsatian into the fold of the German family; but the years have passed, and the would-be brother is still an alien, a conquered subject not an attached fellow-citizen. So sterner and sharper measures have been adopted. The inhabitants of the Reichsland are to be taught a new language, their national songs are to be suppressed, and in the course of a generation or so it is hoped that the old attachment to France will have been stamped out. At least, if it has not been eradicated, the Prussians are resolved that it shall only find expression in German, for the French language is to disappear, dying a violent death by suffocation, or relegated as an ancient tongue to the universities, coming after Greek and Latin.

And if this process does not answer, there are to be in France's lost provinces, as already in Poland, sterner, more severe, and, the opinion of the world when aroused will add spontaneously, more barbarous, repressive measures. Expropriation of property, expatriation of person, are to

follow, and if the full truth were told the would-be creators of this fancied Germanic solidarity would not be sorry to see the mass of the Alsatian people get up under their tyranny and make an exodus to the western side of the Vosges. But the surprising circumstance is, that while this revival of mediæval cruelty is in full swing, while Germany is harrying the consciences if not yet the lands of the severed brothers under the very eyes of France, we have to listen to the confident assurance that the peace of Europe is assured, and that those who talk of war are only idle scaremongers. The truth with regard to the situation is that France, preoccupied with the religious and social differences in her own house, has not yet realised what is happening at her door; and that the people of Alsace, harassed and hampered in their daily life, have not yet been sufficiently goaded to utter the despairing cry for help and rescue that cannot be much longer delayed. Indifferent to the brutal coercion of Poles and Alsatians by the same taskmasters, Sir Edward Grey is solicitous that the blacks of the Congo should be treated with infinite tenderness, and that Greeks and Bulgars should be obliged to sit in amity cheek by jowl.

In all the schemes put forward for the settlement of what is called the Near Eastern Question, the proposal to create a Governor-General of Macedonia is the most puerile. It can only be compared indeed to a boy playing with the fire. In the first place, it is a needless provocation to the Sultan, who can only see in it a sinister attempt to undermine his authority and to bring about the further disruption of his empire. In the second place, it is so manifestly intended to close the door to Salonika in Austria's face, that that Power could not help but oppose it. The proposal is obviously doomed to failure unless there is the intention to resort to force to support it, and if there is this intention the question must then be asked, what force?

British Governments have often undertaken imprudent adventures before, but they certainly have not done anything so mad as would be an attempt to force a Governor-General on Macedonia in the face of Turkish and Austrian opposition backed up by Germany. Prudent France, confined rigidly to the defence of her own territory, and

more than satisfied in any desire for external adventures by her excursion in Morocco, would not be eager to speculate in the discovery of perfection among the lawless and antagonistic races of the Balkan peninsula. Even if she had the inclination she has not the power. All her legions, and still more, are wanted in Lorraine and the Ardennes. Nor is it conceivable that the assurance of the faint and feeble co-operation of Russia will be held sufficient inducement by even the most short-sighted of British Governments to take up so hazardous an enterprise as the one that would be started by the appointment of a non-Turkish Governor-General of Macedonia.

But from no quarter will the proposal receive such violent opposition as from Turkey. It is a proposal to deprive the Sultan of a good part of his legitimate authority, and it is made too at a moment when that potentate, far from thinking himself in a bad way from the military standpoint, has made all his plans to deal Russia in the Caucasus as effective a blow as he dealt Greece only a few years ago in Thessaly. The opposition of Turkey is doubly important because it supplies the opponents of the British project with the very fulcrum that they desire, and provides a decent excuse and a form of legality to those who are thinking not of Turkish necessities but their own selfish ends. But it will be said with the airy confidence which takes no heed of local facts and difficulties that Turkish opposition can be easily beaten down by the British fleet, and that, if a naval demonstration is not sufficient, then the forcing of the Dardanelles will promptly bring the Porte to its knees.

But "the forcing of the Dardanelles," accomplished with ease by Admiral Duckworth a century ago—only, however, be it remembered, to find the exit an affair of much damage and great peril—and again by Admiral Hornby in 1878, is one of those achievements which German science has gone to the uttermost of its power and opportunity to render more difficult if not impossible of accomplishment in the future. While the Foreign Office is counting on the Navy to extricate it from any ludicrous position in which it may find itself through the Porte proving defiant, I wonder whether any heed has been paid to the

confident anticipation in Germany that the Forts—German-constructed, Krupp-armed—of the Dardanelles are destined to furnish, with good luck, one of the graves of British naval supremacy? Still more cause for wonder is the continued confidence expressed in the feasibility of forcing the Dardanelles by the fleet, when the true and the costless way is to deliver the attack on land and not on water. These observations are introduced in the hope that a little calm reflection as to the means of enforcing a policy of adventure in the Balkans may lead to the abandonment of the policy itself.

For many years past Germany has been following a most astute policy at Constantinople, and through the Sultan she has acquired a great and ever-increasing influence in the Mahommedan world. The German Emperor has even received or assumed the title of Protector of Islam, and the Admiral of the Atlantic knows very well what stakes he is playing for. The time is approaching when Germany will expect to derive some material benefit from the course she has systematically pursued, of paying heed only to her own material interests in every dispute or discussion affecting the Turkish Empire. She is the recognised sympathiser with Turkey in regard to her claims at the expense of Persia over the Sheiks of the Shat-ul-Arab, at that of the Khedive in the Sinai peninsula. Going further afield, the generality of mankind are very wide of the truth if Germany does not count for much in the troublous situation of Morocco, which may at any moment furnish a *casus belli* between France and Germany. The enigmatic phrases of Prince Bülow in the Reichstag, about what he termed "the very unsatisfactory situation in Morocco," will not have given much satisfaction in Paris, where the prevailing conviction is that that situation is due to the fetters imposed on France's action by that very Algeciras Act which was the outcome of Germany's sinister diplomacy.

The Morocco situation will not be relieved, as Prince Bülow pretends, by respect for "the spirit of the Algeciras Act," but by its repudiation and by leaving France a free hand. No doubt if complications elsewhere are averted, Germany will be willing to do this "at a price." But for

the moment Prince Bülow confines himself to vague terms which may mean either tacit sanction or grave censure of France's policy, as he may choose by the light of subsequent events to give his own interpretation to his cryptic phrases. All the student of politics need say on the subject is, that the German references to the Moroccan question are, whether intentionally or not, a continuous source of irritation to the French; and remembering the latent bitterness of their feelings, this can scarcely be termed a point in favour of peace.

A good deal has been written of late on the subject of the extended application of the principle of neutrality to the international status of some of the smaller countries of Europe. It has been proposed to extend this form of bondage on a nation's liberty, to Norway, Denmark, and Holland. The only "neutral" state in Europe is Belgium, and there is no question that during the seventy years that the principle has been applied in what used to be "the cockpit of Europe" it has facilitated the growth and development of the Belgian nation. But in Belgium it has now served its turn, and the more vigorous and virile sections of her community are persuaded that she must ere long repudiate "neutrality" and claim all the rights with the risks of an unfettered sovereign state. This sentiment is largely due to the growth of German and the decline of English influence in Belgium. It is curious to note that, while German official opinion is quite favourable to the project of making Holland a neutral state, it is at the same time not averse to Belgium ceasing to be one, but the difference of view becomes easily explicable when one puts on German spectacles.

German authorities are rather inclined to represent that Holland is a "neutral state" already, for such a condition of things would "suit their book." If it were so, in war-time German commerce passing down the Rhine would merely hoist the Dutch flag and gain free and unfettered outlet through Rotterdam to the marts of the world. It would also put an end to the Orange tradition of sturdy independence. But fortunately for England and France, Holland is not yet a "neutral state," but a free and sovereign one that can make treaties of alliance, and that

can take its own part in restraining rather than assisting the expansion of Hohenzollern ideals and designs. On the other hand, Belgium, not being so useful to Germany as an avenue of commerce in war-time—for the Meuse is not a German river—but being of incalculable importance from the military point of view to her, the change from a "neutral" to an independent and presumably allied state would be hailed with unqualified satisfaction at Berlin. How far secret agreements may have gone already towards the attainment of this result can only be known to those who take part in them, but it has always been inconceivable to me, during the last five or six years of Anglo-Congolese controversy, how indifference could be shown to the inevitable consequences of British criticism and censure on what Belgians had done in Central Africa in changing and moulding the external policy of the Belgian nation and Government.

But if it is surprising that the British Government has not foreseen this contingency it is still more remarkable that a similar blindness has prevailed at Paris, and that the French Government has never made any attempt to bring about an amicable adjustment of all differences with regard to the Congo, and thus end a lamentably bitter controversy. France might well have acted in this matter, for she must be the chief sufferer from any change in the status of Belgium. Belgium will, or rather can, only repudiate her neutrality on the guarantee of German protection. The French are trusting to a broken reed if they think that the sympathies of the Belgians with their Gallic brothers will keep them from combining with Germany. The Belgian view is—as we care no longer to rely on England, which of our neighbours can afford us the more ample and complete protection? The conclusion that it is Germany the foe of England, rather than France her friend, is not wholly surprising; but for France this would mean the turning of her defensive position in the Vosges and the opening of the road to Paris from the north!

If there is an atom of common sense left among those who guide British and French foreign policy, no time will be lost in arresting the development of the tendency in Belgium to put an end to all external trouble by merging

herself in the German system. This tendency has been encouraged by the assurance, which is true enough as far as it goes, that in the event of its becoming necessary for Germany to occupy the Meuse forts and the Ardennes, *manu militari*, "for the protection of Belgium," the centres of national life and activity would be left undisturbed.

I have set forth certain facts, unimpeachable in themselves and expressed, I trust, with seemly moderation and modesty, that must be taken into account before acceptance can be given to the declaration that the peace of Europe is assured, and that not merely is the Temple of Janus permanently closed, but that a new Temple of Peace has been opened. As a matter of fact, calmly and coldly stated, the peace of Europe can never be considered assured as long as the main cause of enmity and strife remains unremoved.

Is it necessary to say that this is the continued presence on French soil of the German as a victor? The severance of Alsace and part of Lorraine from France lies at the root of all international disputation in Europe, and so long as this wound remains open, so long as French and German soldiers sleep with their weapons beside them on the frontier within a few miles of each other, must there be the risk of that great collision among the nations which may be the day of Armageddon. The risk of this occurring at an early date has been increased by the harsh treatment of the people of the Reichsland under the resolution passed at Berlin to establish rigid uniformity on the Prussian standard from the Vistula to the Vosges. The full extent and harsh features of the plan are not yet realised in France, but when they are there may be no possibility of restraining national resentment at a gross wrong callously inflicted and of malice prepense.

GERMANY'S PLAN OF ATTACK*

"*DELEND A EST CARTHAGO*"

FROM one end of Germany to the other the following version of history is being dinned into the ears of the rising generation—"Naval supremacy means the mastery of the political and commercial world. In the sixteenth century it belonged to Spain, in the seventeenth to Holland. In the eighteenth it was fought for by France and England; in the nineteenth it was possessed by England. In the twentieth century it will be contested between Germany and England, and *Germany will emerge the victor.*"

For the realisation of this programme Germany has created a most powerful battle fleet, and evolved a definite plan of naval action against this country. Strong light has just been cast on the size, capacity and growth of the fleet. The purpose of this article is to draw attention to Germany's naval plan. Even if it is not the *only* plan designed by German science, it is the one which embraces all its pet theories as to how the mastery of the narrow seas may be wrested from this country, for it is necessary to remember, in the first place, that the whole of Germany's strength at sea is concentrated upon and devoted to the immediate object of overthrowing the English Navy in the North Sea (in Germany always called German Ocean) and the Channel. That one object has been the constant study of German naval experts during the last twenty years. It is not surprising that they are as well acquainted with those waters, even when wrapped in fog and mist, as if they were the high road through an open country. One German naval authority has gone so far as to call the mists of the North Sea Germany's "natural ally."

Without going into the exact details about the German

* *National Defence*, April, 1909.

fleet which, thanks to Mr. Balfour's exposition, has become better known within the last few days, there are certain matters appertaining to that fleet which must claim attention before proceeding further. In the recent debate on the Navy Estimates it was clearly shown that England and Germany are running a neck-and-neck race in the matter of the construction of the highest existing type of battleship to which the name *Dreadnought* has been given. Only totals were counted and the units were assumed to be equal. But this is not the way of counting in Germany. It is assumed there, for various reasons, some of which I will proceed to state, that the German unit is better than the English in a ratio of five to four. In other words, an equality of units on this reckoning gives Germany a superiority of 25 per cent. As German experts do not as a rule indulge in hallucinations, it is well worth our Admiralty's while to seriously examine the reasons for German optimism, which, we may feel fully convinced, is based on scientific deductions and not merely on national egotism or conceit.

From the very beginning of the formation of an ironclad navy in Germany—that is to say, from the creation of Wilhelmshafen on the Jahde—their leading principle in construction and tactics has been that superiority of gunfire constitutes the one ideal object in the ship for war. To that point all German efforts have been directed, and more than once the British Navy has grudgingly and reluctantly been compelled to imitate and follow suit to its younger rival. That it will have to do so again is undoubted, for in the German *Dreadnoughts* the whole of the guns can be brought to bear on the same broadside. It is, therefore, primarily on superior weight in gunfire that the Germans rely in the estimated superiority of their ships over ours of the same class and tonnage. The Germans have adopted a method of their own for enabling all the big guns to be used on either broadside. They have them in the tiers on revolving platforms in turrets, like those in the Brazilian ships now approaching completion at Elswick, but they have also adopted a new mechanism which allows of a gun being turned from one side of the ship to the other with great facility.

While the superiority of gunfire has been the first article in the faith of the creators of the German navy, they have not neglected the defensive element as well. They have the belief that the armour plates turned out by Krupp are superior to those produced in England. In testing the accuracy of this assertion it is useless to institute a comparison with anything Krupps make for foreign orders. They are admittedly of only a secondary order of excellence. The tests applied to the plates and turrets constructed for the Government are of a much more exacting character, and it is contended that none to equal them are applied in England. The point to be noted is that the alleged superiority of the German ships to ours by five to four is based on greater defensive as well as offensive power.

The third point on which the claim to superiority is advanced is the better scientific training of the officers and the superior discipline of the crews. It is claimed for the German officer that he is a man absorbed in his profession, and that he has a more complete mastery of the technical work on board a modern man-of-war than the English officer. He is also animated by superior moral force, which is always greater with those who seek to establish a new pretension than with those who have to maintain an old. The superiority of the crews is based on other considerations, although the claim to higher intelligence is one of them. They are more amenable to discipline, it is declared, because they are more sober, less enfeebled by disease, and better educated than our men. It is also contended that the individual training is more thoroughly carried out than with us. Finally, with regard to effective strength, it is declared that while the total *personnel* of the German fleet is given as between fifty and sixty thousand men, it can be raised at once to one hundred thousand men, all of whom have had naval training, immediately after the declaration of war.

To sum up, the German claim that their unit of the first fighting value is superior to ours by one-fourth is based on these assumptions: superiority in weight of gunfire, in the defensive quality of the armour, in the officers' knowledge of their profession, and in the discipline of the crews.

There remains one further claim—superiority in strategy and the possession of a naval plan intended, in the first place, to bring about the disorganisation of our naval preparations, and, in the second place, to facilitate the landing of an invading force on our shores. The following details will enable our readers to arrive at some conclusion as to how far these pretensions may be held to be justified.

The first point laid down in the plan is that, war having been decided upon, the German Government will be able to screen its preparations, and to make the arrival of the advance squadrons at their respective destinations the first notification of the commencement of hostilities. This contention is based on the absolute readiness of the high sea fleet to sail at a moment's notice, the perfect secrecy with which the ships can be got ready at Kiel, and the scarcely less complete secrecy that cloaks proceedings at Wilhelmshafen. No formal declaration of war is to be made. It will be still better if the North Sea is enwrapped in its habitual grey pall when the moment for action has arrived.

The next principle set forth is to strike quickly, to strike hard and at several places more or less simultaneously. The object of the first attack is to interfere with our mobilisation, to cripple our recuperative resources, and to spread a panic by showing that many points on our coast are exposed to attack, incapable of defence, and open to the descent of an invading army. In this way it is assumed that our preparations will be scattered instead of concentrated, because we shall be unable to feel sure which point is really aimed at by an enemy who presents himself in several directions about the same time.

For the execution of this plan one main achievement and two minor tasks are proposed. To take the latter first. A small squadron, accompanied by an infantry and artillery force of 5,000 men, accommodated on two or three of the American line steamers, will make a dash for the Tyne. Its assigned object is to destroy the works at Elswick, for which task a landing force is considered necessary. Having done its work there, the ships and the troops would return without delay to the Elbe. The Tyne is about 500 miles from the Elbe. It is computed that within two days of reaching its destination the expedition

would be back in the safety of its own ports, having deprived England of one of its most efficient naval yards and military arsenals.

The second of the minor missions is to execute a raid on the Humber, to destroy the guardship in it, to do as much damage as possible to navigation, and to produce the general impression that has been spoken of. The probability is that this attack would be mainly one of torpedo-boats, and of leaving the Humber estuary well sown with floating mines. The ships assigned for this work would remain in the North Sea, to serve as a supporting force for the retiring fleet charged with the main mission.

A third minor movement will be against Harwich. A torpedo attack may, if circumstances admit (the circumstances referred to being essentially the state of the atmosphere), be made on the little squadron in the Orwell; but the idea is to make no real attack here, but to leave a sufficient number of ships *en vedette* to engage and overthrow the little squadron stationed in Harwich harbour, if it were to venture out to take the offensive or to obtain information. These ships would also serve as the first reserve for those retiring from the main undertaking.

The principal task before the German high sea fleet, raised for the campaign sketched for it to a strength of not fewer than twenty battleships (twenty-two battleships were mentioned in the scheme from which these statements are taken, but, of course, they were not *Dreadnoughts*), is to block Sheerness, to destroy Chatham, and to execute a torpedo-boat raid up the Thames. The instructions to the torpedo-boat squadron are to do all the damage they can, and to rejoin the battleship squadron as soon as they have discharged their mission. Whether to encourage the leaders of this forlorn hope, or because it is really believed to be so, it is asserted that this attack will encounter little or no opposition, as the precautions taken for the defence will be totally nullified by the surprise of the attack.

The attack on Sheerness and Chatham represents the serious part of the enterprise. The question of success is admitted to depend very largely on the point whether the German fleet of twenty battleships can get to the Nore without their approach being heralded. If they can, then

a certain elemental success by mere superiority of numbers is a mathematical certainty. The success may not be crushing, but it must count for something. It might be compared to Sir Francis Drake's raid on Cadiz. I am minimising the consequences, but they are not minimised in the scheme from which I am citing. It is declared therein that, while the attack would be audacious, because striking at the heart of a powerful adversary, it would possess a reasonable chance of great success—the greater, it is admitted, if the atmospheric conditions proved only more favourable to the assailant than the defender. If the great naval base at the mouth of the Thames were even crippled in the first stage of the struggle, it is contended that not merely would the mobilisation of the English fleet be rendered extremely difficult and incomplete, but that abject terror would prevail in the Metropolis whose outer door would thus have been forced. Even in the event of repulse the German fleet would by this offensive movement have given a striking demonstration of its worth, and might safely and honourably fall back on its secondary rôle, viz. the defence of its own rivers and of the entrances to the Baltic.

In the Paper from which these citations are taken the attack on the Thames has coupled with it a projected raid on Portsmouth. This is based on the achievement of the squadron of Prince Henry of Prussia, which in December 1897 got into Portsmouth during a dense fog, past all the forts and guardships quite undetected. But it is declared in a kind of addendum that, in view of the creation of the new naval base at Dover, an attempt on Portsmouth in the first stage of a naval war might prudently be abandoned, for even if it achieved a certain measure of success, the attacking force would be liable to be cut off and destroyed on its way back in the straits of Dover.

The naval plan represents the offensive operations in the first stage of a naval war with England. For its successful execution it counts on the element of surprise in the absence of a declaration of hostilities, on celerity of movement, on the superiority of ships manœuvring in the open sea over those stationary in harbour or river estuaries, that is to say, taken unawares. It also largely presumes that the English Navy will display in the hour of trial the

qualities of cocksureness, over-confidence and contempt of the enemy, which have cost the nation so many unpleasant experiences on land. It is based also on the unavoidable tactical advantage of the assailant in being able to select his point of attack. On our fully exposed eastern coast it is inevitable that vulnerable points should exist, but perhaps something may be done to give Elswick greater protection against the raid of combined land and sea forces that figures almost in the forefront of the plan indicated.

With regard to the navigation of the North Sea in fog it is contended that German navigators have reduced it almost to the dimensions of a mathematical certainty. They have, as it were, mapped it out, and from a given point to a given point can tell, by the rotations of the engine, with almost complete accuracy where they are. It is an enlarged application of the practice between Dover and Calais, where on a dark or misty night the cautious captain stops his ship after 2,000 revolutions to find out where he is.

The plan goes on to record that the object of this first offensive movement is to damage the English position, to cause delay in the mobilisation of the fleet, to destroy some of its bases of equipment, but it adds emphatically that the crucial test of the relative power of the two countries will be decided not on the coasts of England but in the North Sea, at the mouths of the German rivers, and at the entrance to the Baltic. The principles it enunciates for success in the one case are the same as those for success in the other. Careful preparation beforehand, the accumulation of a superior force to any that can be arrayed against it with regard to the immediate task to be undertaken, and the capacity to hit hard and quickly—these are the principles upon which German strategists lay stress.

But it must not be thought that even the most sanguine of Germans anticipate that English naval power can be destroyed at one blow or by a successful naval raid. All that they claim is that Germany will thus, in the first instance, destroy the pretensions of the English Fleet to invincibility, and that if this were done England's position in the world would at once decline. As the immediate consequences of that national abasement it is predicted

that the Colonies would secede, India revolt, and the international position of this country decline to something on a level with that of Holland.

There are two serious points in this revelation of a settled plan to which attention must be drawn. There is the striking fact that the German naval plan is offensive not defensive. There is the calm assertion that the *personnel* of the German navy can at any given moment be raised to an effective strength of 100,000 men. It is not more than three years since Sir John Fisher told the citizens of London that they might sleep peacefully of night because our Navy was really invincible. On a previous occasion he had declared that "our frontiers are the shores of the enemy." Are these rash sayings coming home to roost? It is not we but the Germans who are counting on getting their blow in first. If we wanted to anticipate them we should need to recover Heligoland and to be convinced that the Danish straits were well enough held to give us time to take Kiel from the Baltic. But how can we expect vigorous and offensive action from administrators who still trust German assurances and who shelve the best fighting admiral in the fleet for telling them very much what has been written in these pages?

THE NEUTRALITY OF BELGIUM*

THE purport of this article is to establish the truth as to the question of the neutrality of Belgium. For that purpose it will be necessary to prove several different things. Among them I may mention the following: how it arose, what it means, what are the obligations on Belgium, what are the perils that beset it, and, lastly, what is its practical value.

The case of Switzerland illustrates one phase of neutrality, viz., that of a voluntary neutrality accepted as its distinctive attribute by a nation. The Swiss proclaimed their neutrality of their own accord and without outside pressure. They did not ask anybody to help them, and they did not ask any Power or any conclave of Powers to confirm what they declared to be their own intention. Swiss neutrality therefore differs from every other in the essential points that it is self-imposed and that it breathes the fixed determination of a free people to make it good in the teeth of hostile opposition. It is true that the Congress of Vienna, ratified by the subsequent treaty of Paris, gave a European sanction to what the Swiss people had decided upon; but this does not invalidate the statement that Swiss neutrality was voluntary and self-imposed.

I have referred to Swiss neutrality in order to emphasise the difference between it and that of Belgium. If Switzerland is the most typical case of voluntary neutrality, Belgium is the most characteristic and important instance of what is called in international law compulsory and permanent neutrality. The neutrality of Switzerland, being the free act of its citizens, might be repudiated at any

* *National Defence*, June, 1909.

moment. If the Swiss were to do so in their character of a sovereign people, all Europe could say would be that an end had been put to an excellent arrangement. But the neutrality of Belgium is not voluntary. It was imposed upon her by the Powers. She could not then repudiate it or shake it off without either defying the Powers or admitting that the validity of her own repudiation would have to be sanctioned by a conference of the five Powers who signed the final treaties of 1839, before it could have effect. These introductory remarks are made for the purpose of showing that Belgium, unlike Switzerland, is not a free agent. If she were to attempt to become a free agent she could only do so at the risk of embroiling the Powers who took part in her own creation as a separate, independent, and permanently neutral state, and the risk would be nothing less than her own continued existence.

The principle of neutrality had never been applied in the past to Belgium, which was called without much exaggeration "the cockpit of Europe." The idea of neutrality, however, was not displeasing to the Belgian mind, and it is worth recalling that the great Van Artevelde in the fourteenth century propounded it for the Flemish communes.

When the Belgians revolted against the Dutch in 1830, and established their own government and constitution, not a word was said by any of their leaders on the subject of the country posing as a neutral. The Dutch were expelled by force of arms from, practically speaking, the whole of Belgium, and it was recognised by the Belgians themselves that they would have to continue to fight for the maintenance of the independence which they had at last won. It is clear, then, that the intention of affixing the character of permanent neutrality to the new Belgian State was not of home growth. It was really an idea imported from abroad, or rather an arrangement forced on it by the Powers. But if we turn to the earlier meetings of the London Conference we find no reference whatever to any proposal for establishing the neutrality of Belgium. The suggestion seems to have found expression for the first time during the negotiations for the acceptance of the Belgian throne by Prince Leopold, and it probably arose

from the desire to put a permanent end to the schemes mooted by ambitious persons for the partition of Belgium. Whatever was the exact manner in which the idea of making Belgium a permanently neutral state originated—and the history of the point is not wholly free from obscurity—it is certain that the first specific mention of her neutrality is to be found in the "Eighteen Articles." The reference therein is remarkably precise in explaining the full significance of what the Powers decreed.

The text of the articles setting forth the principle reads as follows:—

Art. 9.—Belgium, within the limits traced in conformity with the principles laid down in the present preliminaries, shall form a perpetually neutral state. The five Powers, without wishing to intervene in the internal affairs of Belgium, guarantee her that perpetual neutrality as well as the integrity and inviolability of her territory in the limits mentioned in the present article.

Art. 10.—By just reciprocity Belgium shall be held to observe this same neutrality towards all the other states, and to make no attack on their internal or external tranquillity, whilst always preserving the right to defend herself against every foreign aggression.

If the Eighteen Articles had preserved their validity there could have been no possibility of misconstruing the precise signification of the neutrality of Belgium. But the Eighteen Articles were cancelled, and became null and void within four months of their being drafted. They gave Belgium the legitimate right of defending herself, which she attempted to do in August 1831, when the Dutch invaded her territory; but, owing to her own improvidence, she failed to repel the invader on that occasion. On the other hand, the Powers absolutely failed to secure for her the inviolability of her territory which they had guaranteed. It is true that they took steps to undo the harm that had been done and to preserve the future independence and inviolability of Belgium.

The revised and binding form of the Eighteen Articles is known as the Twenty-four Articles, and this arrangement, more fortunate than its predecessor, became eventually the text of the treaty of peace in 1839. But the definition given to Belgian neutrality in these later articles differs materially from that contained in the earlier instru-

ment. The matter is dealt with in Article 7, and reads as follows:—

Belgium, within the limits specified in Articles 1, 2, and 4, shall form an independent and perpetually neutral state. She shall be bound to observe this same neutrality towards all other states.

The guarantee of this neutrality is given in one of the added articles (No. 25), which sets forth that the five Powers “guarantee to his Majesty the King of the Belgians the execution of all the articles preceding.”

It is therefore clear that the promises to Belgium as the price of her permanent neutrality by the binding arrangement—viz., the Twenty-four Articles—are not as ample or as comprehensive as those given by the first arrangement—viz., the Eighteen Articles—which lapsed within a few months of their being drafted.

Pundits in international law can read much into the vague phraseology of the last-quoted article, which by its incompleteness leaves a wide opening for ingenuity and casuistry. Here I content myself with pointing out that the Powers guaranteed in the last resort only the permanent neutrality, and not the integrity of the independence and the inviolability of the territory of the Belgian nation. I shall make my meaning clearer before the end of this paper, but it seems to me beyond dispute that the essential difference between the two arrangements is this: in place of the Powers guaranteeing the inviolability of Belgium they threw that responsibility upon the Belgians themselves, while they would vindicate as they thought best the principle of her permanent neutrality later on, after perhaps they had seen how Belgium met her own responsibilities. I do not think that the full significance of this point has yet been grasped anywhere, and more especially in Belgium. I find no recognition of it in the learned works of the Chevalier Descamps and Professor Nys. If the principle is such as I describe it to be, an enormous responsibility is cast on the Belgian Government, and inferentially an overwhelming blame must fall upon it for having grossly neglected to discharge it. In other words the five Powers, of whom only England and France were sincere, placed on Belgium herself the obligation of

defending her own existence whilst they proclaimed with much parade the really empty principle of her neutrality. It might be argued that a conqueror would fulfil all the obligations of the Twenty-four Articles if, on overrunning and annexing Belgium, he were to declare that that part of his dominions would be regarded by him as permanently neutral in the sense demanded by them.

The formal sextuple treaty of 19th of April, 1839, between Belgium and the five Powers adds nothing to the matter. There is no explanation anywhere as to what the Powers had in their mind on the subject of the dropped phrases, "the integrity and inviolability of Belgian territory." Failing to find any elucidation in the text of the treaties or the protocols relating thereto, the question naturally presents itself, What was the interpretation placed upon the exact international position of Belgium in practice? The view taken by the Belgian Government, and the tacit acquiescence of the Powers in that view, may not supersede the strict juridical significance of a treaty or other international pact, but at least it supplies the material for an opinion on the subject which may be assumed to be correct enough for the ordinary purposes of business. What we find in the region of practice makes it quite clear that the neutrality conferred on Belgium by the Twenty-four Articles was not as wide and comprehensive as that bestowed by the earlier Eighteen Articles. The point is of very great importance, for it is clear that Belgian opinion assumes too often that the earlier principle is still in force, whereas it was dropped and became *ipso facto* null and void. In this matter it can be demonstrated that Belgian opinion has fluctuated, and that some politicians have represented the protective character of the neutrality clause to be far more positive and obligatory than it is.

Let us now turn to facts. In August 1831, when the Eighteen Articles formed the basis of Belgium's international position, King Leopold I., on the Dutch invasion, at once appealed to the Powers to fulfil their promise to protect the inviolability and integrity of Belgium. His action was repudiated by his own Government, which decreed that Belgium should defend herself. It was a heroic decision, only the Government had neglected to

provide the means of execution. Its failure to establish the national power killed the Eighteen Articles, and led to the substitution of the Twenty-four, which were not merely harsher for Belgium generally but less satisfactory on the point of her neutrality.

In August 1831 King Leopold I. called upon the Powers to protect Belgium, because that was in his opinion their duty under their own instrument. But he never did so again, because the Twenty-four Articles of the following November contained no stipulation to that effect. A new judicial position was created, and the King fully appreciated the change. He realised that the obligation of protecting herself was imposed on Belgium, and throughout his reign he never again asked any of the guaranteeing Powers to come to his assistance. He did not do so in 1848 or in 1857, and why? Because it was perfectly clear to him that the obligation of defending the integrity and inviolability of the country rested not on the Powers but on Belgium. The obligation of neutrality could only come into force in the second place.

It was only after the death of King Leopold I. that a larger significance was read into the responsibility of the Powers for the security of Belgium. Up to 1865 it was concluded, and rightly so, if it is remembered that the armed forces of France and Prussia were at that period only standing armies, that a Belgian army of 100,000 men sufficed for the protection of the country, and such an army was always kept at a high level of excellence under its first king. But in 1866 the external danger became more serious, the political problem more involved, and although the nominal forces of France and Prussia were not greatly increased, it had become clear that the wars of the future would be carried on by larger armies than in the past. As a consequence the Belgian army sank to a lower ratio of comparison. In other words, the real foundation of Belgian security depreciated. At that moment too a critical condition was created by the sudden acuteness of the Luxemburg question, which was not merely one of the status of the Duchy but of the material point involved in railway communications. That crisis was overcome by the London Conference of 1867, but anyone who will take

the trouble to consult the remarkable memorandum of the late Emile Banning will perceive that there were thinkers in Belgium who realised the new peril that beset their country, and the narrow escape it had then had of being involved in a great European struggle.

But the peril in regard to the Grand Duchy was small in comparison with that which arose three years later from the Franco-German War. Belgium's two great neighbours were engaged in a mortal struggle which took place in one phase close to the Belgian frontier. Immediately on the declaration of war the Belgian Government took steps to preserve its neutrality and to vindicate it if attacked. But the result was not altogether encouraging; for the Belgian army, which ought on mobilisation to have produced 112,000 men, only provided about 80,000. After the first German successes of the campaign it became evident that the Belgian army would be unable to maintain its position if the German victors chose to cross the frontier to attack it. At this stage England came to the rescue of Belgium in no uncertain manner, and the incident must be placed to the credit of the reputation of Mr. Gladstone.

In the first few days of August 1870 the British Government intervened in the struggle in an emphatic and masterful manner. It said to the two belligerents, "You shall not touch Belgium," and for the fulfilment of its purpose it concluded separate treaties with each of them, engaging itself to declare war upon whichever Power invaded Belgium. In 1870-1, therefore, it was English intervention which saved Belgium from invasion, and not the home preparations which had sufficed in the time of Leopold I. A similar, but in some respects a more acute, crisis arose in 1875, when Germany, at the inspiration of Bismarck, got ready to smash France. The nature of the crisis obviously precluded any idea of an arrangement between England and Germany. In 1870 the aggressor might to all seeming have been either France or Germany, but in 1875 it could only be Germany. There was only one practical and honourable course open to us, a military convention with Belgium herself for the defence of her territory against aggression. The prompt retreat of the German Government, through the action of Queen Victoria sup-

ported by the Emperor Alexander II., rendered it unnecessary to append the formal signature to what had been agreed.

These practical vindications, not of Belgium's neutrality but of her integrity, tended to strengthen the conviction among Belgians that England at least, if not the other Powers, guaranteed the inviolability of their country, and the consequence of this persuasion was that they abated their own efforts to defend it and make it secure. Prominent politicians have stated repeatedly in the Brussels Chamber that there was no need to increase or improve the Belgian army because England would always defend the country, that Belgium's best defence consisted in remaining weak and unprepared, and that the home garrison which sufficed at the period of Sadowa and Sedan was still enough in this age of armed nations. It must be admitted that these views are not confined to a few politicians; Belgian opinion generally is leavened by such heresies. It is most essential, therefore, in the interests of the Belgians themselves, that they should realise that what is guaranteed is not the integrity and inviolability of their territory but its neutrality. They will some day or other be compelled to recognise this, despite the specious assurances of those who may happen to have found a way to their momentary confidence.

But it may be said that the one stipulation carries the other with it. This assumption is not to be implicitly accepted. Circumstances may arise on the one side or the other to make it absolutely false. If Belgian means of defence, if her military preparations were to decline to a lower point than the evident state of inadequacy which they have reached at this moment, no British Government would propose in an emergency such military co-operation as was offered in 1875. And if it was manifestly impossible to obtain effective co-operation from the Belgians themselves in defending the integrity and inviolability of their country, they would very quickly be informed that no responsibility devolved on anyone in those matters except themselves.

There remains, then, the principle of the neutrality of Belgium for which England has gone bail. The unopposed

invasion of Belgium by Germany—unopposed, for at this moment Belgium has not merely no means of resistance, but she has also, by according improved railway facilities, opened more than one gate to the hypothetical invader—destroys that neutrality at a blow. Her impotence would make her willy-nilly the ally for the moment of the invader. The idea of the Powers in leaving her as a kind of buffer between France and Germany would have broken down, but it would not at all follow that the remedy we and our allies would apply would be the preservation of the integrity of Belgium, compromised as it had been by the contributory negligence of its Government and people. The practical task before us would be to compel the invader to retire, and the best way of effecting that object might be found outside Belgium. But in any event it would have been established that Belgium had failed by wilful neglect in her duty to herself as well as in her obligations to the guaranteeing Powers, and more especially to England, who on several occasions had demonstrated her loyalty by deeds. Totally different views would then come into force, and the value of the neutrality of Belgium, as an international guarantee of peace and the balance of power, might even be subjected to fresh examination. The one thing essential in a situation of some complexity is for the Belgian authorities not to be caught napping, and to see (assuming for the moment that they have the wish) that the arrangement upon which they have so long relied for their independence is not destroyed by their own act or negligence.

The neutrality of Belgium is a most precious principle for the tranquillity of Western Europe, but its value disappears if it is not maintained intact. The question whether it is to be so maintained or not rests primarily with the Belgians themselves. In 1870 the Belgians drew up their army on the Semois. In 1910, or perhaps before, will they have their troops with sufficient promptness in the forts of Liège, and at Stavelot and Viel Salm to close those entrances? No one can answer the question save the Belgian Government itself. But the attitude of politicians in Belgium is not encouraging. The decision of vital points is put off from day to day. People in Brussels seem unable

to realise that the matter is urgent, and does not admit of delay. The sands of Belgian independence on the old lines may be running out without anyone appreciating the true significance of the drift.

This brings us to the final point in the consideration of the problem. Reference was made at the beginning of this paper to the possibility of Belgium asserting her right to become a free agent and repudiate her neutrality. It is not doubtful that such a step has been seriously considered in view of the provocation supplied by the attacks on the Congo administration in this country. Official Belgium at least is swayed by bitter feelings at what it regards as the covetous and hypocritical censure of the good work Belgians have done in Central Africa, and when there is bitterness in the heart the brain does not always decide wisely. By official Belgium is meant the King, the administrators, the permanent civil service, who in most countries keep the governmental machine in working order. Extraneous matters are contributing to invest their views with greater importance, and to bring them into closer harmony with the general opinion of the country. It is worth while to see what they are and to ponder over them.

Europe imposed a position of neutrality on Belgium for its own security and convenience. The Belgian nation accepted it in the first place because it could not help itself, but it very soon saw how advantageous the arrangement was from a material point of view, and it adapted itself to the situation. It not merely adapted itself, but it has assumed ever since that its security was assured by others with a very mild co-operation on its own part. When a nation believes that it has not to rely in the main on its own efforts for the preservation of its independence, patriotism undoubtedly wanes. The feeling of being protected inevitably becomes part of the national sentiment, until at last it is regarded as essential to existence. The wise and noble appeals of Leopold I. to the Belgians to show self-reliance and to be well prepared to resist invasion have been forgotten. The result is that thinking Belgians are now compelled to recognise that they have not the means of defending their independence at the very moment that the menace to that independence becomes more evident

and alarming. Confronted with that position of things Belgian political parties, instead of combining for the purpose of providing the means of meeting the national danger, are engaged in attacking one another on points of detail, and in retarding the introduction of the necessary reforms in the army. Nothing has been or apparently will be done. Belgium has enjoyed nearly eighty years of peace; she seems to count on its lasting till the millennium.

There is too much reason to apprehend, however, that other motives have been at work, and if evidence were asked of this it would be found in the faulty and antiquated disposition of the Belgian army which leaves the whole of the Ardennes without the smallest garrison except that at Arlon, an isolated position where the troops are assigned apparently to be immolated on the morrow of invasion. The need of protection has become part of the life of Belgium. The old faith in England no longer exists. The present English army is not regarded as sufficiently numerous to play the rôle on the Continent that it could have played in 1870 or 1875. It is seen that the British Navy has a desperate struggle before it to maintain its supremacy on the seas against Germany, and if there is an opinion one way or the other in Brussels it inclines to favour the latter's chances. At the same time, disbelief in the power of France and her ability to cope with Germany is profound. In the best-informed circles in Belgium France is regarded as "a sick man."

It is not surprising, then, to find that the Belgian desire to be protected by someone has led many of her leaders to think that the protection of Germany might after all be the most advantageous if events were to compel a choice. The protection of Germany would in a sense be imposed, for no one can doubt any longer that, in the event of war, Germany's first move will be across Belgium, certainly to the French frontier, and probably at the same time on Antwerp as well. If the ground had been well prepared in the diplomatic sphere, as no doubt it would have been, there is no reason why the German advance should be opposed. The Belgian Government would accept the presence of German troops as the condition of the protection which it desired, and which it had previously per-

suaded itself that no other Power save Germany could provide.

The neutrality of Belgium in the sense in which it has existed since 1831-9, viz., that warring hosts were to respect its frontiers, is already doomed. This has been due to a large extent to the indifference of the British Government to all questions of foreign policy in the first stage, and to its irritating procedure with regard to the Congo question in recent years, and at the present time. The result is that English advice is no longer heeded at Brussels except when it happens to accord with the opinion of Berlin, and then it subserves German and not English policy. The Belgian Government has for some time past been doing exactly what the German Government requested, not merely because it felt compelled, but because it wished to do so. The real danger of this insidious advice lies in the fact that the Belgians are required to do nothing themselves, and they are assured that any occupation of their country by German troops would be only temporary, and as much localised as possible. The outlook for both England and France in Belgium is at this moment dark and threatening. The neutrality imposed on that country has dulled the sentiment of patriotism, diminished the self-reliance essential to the preservation of a state, and induced the authorities to turn to those who seem the most agreeable to deal with and the most conciliatory in their treatment of Belgian interests. But over and above all these considerations there exist in the minds of Belgian statesmen three main convictions—distrust of British policy mixed with displeasure at British criticism in regard to the Congo, disbelief in the power and soundness of France, and finally absolute belief in the overwhelming power of Germany, and in the probably inevitable extension of its influence to the mouths of the Scheldt, the Meuse and the Rhine. Such is the opinion of the instructed Belgians, the élite of their nation, and it should not be ignored.

AN OBJECT-LESSON IN GERMAN PLANS*

WHILE many writers both at home and in Germany are doing their best to persuade the public of the two countries that peace is assured and Anglo-German friendship a desirable if not an essential consummation for their happiness, I propose to place before your readers an object-lesson which is based not on theory, but on fact. The circumstances to which I refer are entirely fresh. They relate to preparations which began no more than eighteen months ago, and which have only just reached the stage of completion. These preparations are the more significant because they are not of a nature to attract much notice. They do not relate to the establishment of camps or the construction of fortresses. Not an additional soldier has made his appearance in the localities affected. The neighbouring States have been provided with no visible cause of umbrage, yet before this paper is concluded it will be made clear that a most serious menace has risen up unnoticed, and perhaps unrealised, along the greater part of the eastern frontier of Belgium.

To appreciate the full significance of the change, it is necessary to take a glance into the past. When Germany established the camp at Elsenborn, in 1896, as a summer training ground for the Coblenz army corps, it was without any railway communications at all. The nearest station was at Hellenthal, twelve miles east of the camp, with difficult country intervening. Besides the line then and still terminating at Hellenthal was only a light railway, itself a branch of the line traversing the Eiffel from Cologne to Treves. Having established the camp at Elsenborn, the German Government very naturally decided

* *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1910.

to improve the communications with it, and with this end in view a new railway was constructed from Aix-la-Chapelle to St. Vith, passing one mile to the west of the camp at Sourbrodt. This railway was a single line only, with double lines at the stations Montjoie, Kalter Herberg, Sourbrodt, Butgenbach* and Weismes. That it was intended to be only a single-rail line is shown by the fact that the high embankment raised above the valley between Montjoie and Kalter Herberg was originally, and until eighteen months ago, only wide enough at the top for one pair of rails. At Sourbrodt, in those days, there were one or two short sidings in addition to the 2 ft. 3 in. rails for the steam tram connecting the railway station with the camp. At the other stations named there were no sidings at all. This was the state of things when I visited the locality in the autumn of 1907. I shall now describe what I discovered last year.

Before doing so, it may be as well to state certain facts about the locality traversed by the line to St. Vith, which will show that the German Government would never have undertaken the cost of making it but for its own ends. The inhabitants of this region are not Germans. They are Walloons, of the same race as the Belgians of Liège and Stavelot, speaking French until the other day as their mother-tongue. I say until the other day, because in 1905 the Germans passed a law making the use of German obligatory, and classing French with foreign tongues. The country was, and is still, most primitive. There are no local resources or industries (exception being made for Malmédy), and the Walloon population is a stay-at-home one that does not provide many passengers for the railway. The point to be made plain is that the single-line railway from St. Vith to Aix-la-Chapelle, with its modest little branch line from Weismes to Malmédy, more than sufficed to satisfy all local needs.

In 1908 the German Government suddenly decided to double the line of railway from Aix-la-Chapelle to Weismes in the first stage, and St. Vith in the second. It also decided to construct at each of the insignificant stations

* This station is now the Weywertz Junction, and the new one at Butgenbach is on the line to Junkerath.

on the route, where a few dozen cottages contain the local population, extensive sidings capable between them of accommodating trains that would convey a whole army corps. Having come to this decision, the authorities wasted no time in putting the work in hand. The high embankment between Montjoie and Kalter Herberg was widened and strengthened, and, owing to the exigencies of the position, the earthwork was piled up now on one side and again on the other of the existing track. This section represented the most difficult part of the undertaking, as the greater stretch of the line traverses a fairly level plateau not much under 2,000 ft. above sea-level, and it may be noted that at no point is the line carried over any bridge or viaduct. It would, therefore, be impossible for an adventurous enemy to do it any serious injury or greatly hinder communications along it by a daring raid.

Last May the doubling of the rails had been completed to Weismes, the junction where the traveller changes for Malmédy. I will now enumerate the sidings which complete and, in a sense, constitute the true importance of the railway. Aix-la-Chapelle, which has always been a point of concentration for the Prussian army on mobilisation, has long possessed a vast field of sidings sufficient for the requirements of an entire army corps, but their very extensiveness renders it difficult for the observer to say whether they have or have not been added to in the last few years. The natural inference, seeing what has taken place south of Aix-la-Chapelle, would be that the number of sidings there has been augmented. At the quite unimportant stations north of Montjoie, viz., Cornely-Munster, Raeren, Roetgen, and Lammersdorf, two, and in some cases three, sidings have been added. These sidings are not in active use. There is no local traffic to take advantage of them. The trains are few, and run at long intervals, and the goods traffic, except during the period of active work on the railway was and is practically nil. The sidings have only a military value. They stand in readiness for the day when they shall be needed on the mobilisation of the German army.

The addition of the sidings becomes more marked at and south of Montjoie. At Montjoie there are four new

sidings flanking the station and on the western side of the metals. South of the station three sidings, each at least 500 yards in length, have been constructed on the eastern side of the track. At Kalter Herberg sidings have been made on both sides of the line. It is not surprising, considering that the station is in connection with a camp where in summer at least there are 20,000 men, to find the most extensive changes of all at Sourbrodt. The two modest sidings for a few coal-trucks in 1907 have grown into a perfect network of sidings, two south of the station, and on the eastern side of the line, being each at least half a mile in length and equipped with turn-tables. There are corresponding sidings at Butgenbach, and a little north of the Weismes junction. The result is that by the new double line, supplemented by the numerous sidings echeloned along the track, it has become not merely possible but easy for the German authorities to concentrate an army corps at or near Weismes in a very short space of time.

Before drawing conclusions from the facts enumerated, the sketch given of railway expansion in Rhenish Prussia must be completed by an account of the extension of the light railway which has existed for some years between Weismes and Malmédy into Belgian territory. Malmédy, which in old days formed part of the same Prince Abbotship, has continued to be in close touch and sympathy, as it were, with Stavelot in Belgium. The citizens of both are of the same race, religion, and, until the new German law, speech. No one who knows the Walloon race can fail to be attracted by their sterling qualities, and to have a friend in one place is to find another in the other. Still, the diligence twice a day, with sufficient work for the local *louageurs* for those who could afford the private carriage, sufficed for all the requirements of friendly intercourse. The road from Malmédy to Stavelot is a quiet road. I have traversed it perhaps a hundred times; unless the diligence has happened to pass, I have generally had it to myself. But the Germans were not satisfied. For occult reasons they must have a railway, more especially as the major half of the line has to be made with Belgian money. And the Belgians, flouted by the English on account of the anti-Congo craze, have to take German requests as

orders. So this Malmédy-Stavelot line has been taken in hand with the same alacrity as characterised the doubling of the rails from Aix-la-Chapelle to Weismes, and the Belgians have been compelled, in defiance of local hostility, to do their share of the work. There still remains to be taken in hand the vital point of the line, viz., the tunnel outside Stavelot which will connect this little railway—an advanced guard, as it were, of the German system—with the main Belgian line from Pepinster *via* Spa and Stavelot to Gouvy and Libramont.

If there were really vigilant Governments in London and Paris, as there is in Berlin, this tunnel would be vetoed. Sooner than that it should be made by German-Belgian money, France and England ought to make it a *casus belli*; but there is no far-seeing prescience either in Downing Street or on the Quai d'Orsay. Had there been, Belgium's co-operation in the Malmédy-Stavelot line would never have been wrested from the authorities in the Rue de la Loi at Brussels. Belgium has yielded in this and other matters because she could not resist without support, and no support was forthcoming. It is too late to veto the line; it is not too late to prevent the construction of the tunnel, which is the great menace concealed in the scheme for Belgium herself, as well as France. A light railway from Malmédy to Stavelot, with a terminus in the fields adjacent to the ancient Abbaye, is, I may suggest, at the worst only a local luxury, if not a local necessity. It would have no military value. The opposite reason explains why the Germans have been so tenacious of the point that the line from Malmédy to Stavelot should link on with the Belgian main line to the Grand Duchy and the French frontier, and that Belgium should defray the cost of the expensive and, except for the establishment of direct communications between Germany and the Ardennes, useless tunnel on the northern side of the townlet of Stavelot.

We have, then, before us the evidence of an extraordinary activity in railway construction and development within the German frontier which is not to be explained by any local necessities arising either from population or from industrial or mineral development. We need not make excuses where the Germans attempt none; this

development is avowedly for military purposes. If the reader asks why, the reply is to be found in the new principles of strategy which have recently been formally adopted by the German Staff. Incidentally to our subject, it may be remarked that not sufficient attention has been drawn here to this new strategy, which may be termed the natural corollary of the substitution of armed nations for standing armies. For prompt action at the scene of war, nations require railway carriages as near their homes as possible to carry them without a break to the frontier; standing armies need fortresses and camps as near the frontier as might be. With regard to our special matter, the importance of Elsenborn camp has diminished; on the other hand, the double line from Aix-la-Chapelle to Weismes (I learn that it is being continued to Montenu, which has lately been connected with Elsenborn camp by a fine road levelled for the rapid passage of artillery, and which has for some years been connected with Viel Salm, in Belgium, south of Stavelot, by an excellent carriage route), with its accessories in numerous sidings, has become a menace of the first significance not merely to Belgium, but to France so far as her undefended northern frontier is involved.

The new strategy referred to is based on the principle that the invasion of a neighbouring State should no longer be executed by troops already in garrison on the frontier, but by troops conveyed by train from the interior of the country to the points of attack. In this way no warning is given to the assailed. It is represented that, within twenty-four hours of the public knowledge that something special was afoot, a hundred thousand men could be collected in the neighbourhood of Malmédy. Even if this fact stood alone it would be of alarming significance, but it does not stand alone. A very similar development of what may be called railway facilities for the purposes of invasion is noticeable on other main lines of communication from Germany into Belgium. For the moment there has been no evidence of railway activity west of Aix-la-Chapelle on the main line to Liège, for the simple reason that German scheming in this quarter is concentrated on obtaining the adoption of the Welkenraedt route to

Louvain for Brussels and Antwerp, which would avoid Liége altogether. That is a matter which requires very close attention, but it does not come within the scope of the present paper. The opinion may be hazarded that Germany, being well aware what a formidable obstacle the fortified position of Liége is in her path, will spare no effort to nullify its importance by turning the existing railway routes in another direction; but, unlike the doubling of the frontier railway in the old Stavelot principality, this cannot be done surreptitiously or in the dark.

If we turn a little to the north of Liége, we find what may be called the counterpart of the railway development that has been described between Aix-la-Chapelle and Weismes. The town of Ruremonde, or Roermond, in Holland, may be called the central point of interest. It lies on the right bank of the Meuse, which is here crossed by two bridges, and it is a station on the direct railway from Cologne *viâ* Rheydt to Moll, Herenthals, and Antwerp. The intervening region is the flat expanse of the Campine, without a fort or a garrison, and the passenger trains cover the distance from the Meuse to the fortified city on the Scheldt in less than three hours. Twenty years ago the late General Brialmont pointed out that a German invasion of Belgium might be effected from this direction, and he was probably the first to assign any strategical importance to Dalheim. At that time the railway traversing the Campine from east to west did not exist; consequently a German advance from Dalheim would in those days have been directed against the middle Meuse between Namur and Liége, and Brialmont proposed to render it impossible by constructing a fortress at St. Trond. This proposition was never carried into effect, and the fortification of St. Trond would have no influence now on a German dash from Dalheim on Antwerp.

The line through Dalheim and Ruremonde to Antwerp has always been double-railed, so there has been no need here to do more than add to the sidings. This process necessitated, however, the widening of the bridge over which the line runs about 150 yards east of Dalheim station. The bridge was widened for the purpose of laying a third pair of rails connecting with a new siding on a high

embankment. This siding is about a quarter of a mile in length. Other sidings have been constructed at the station itself, where there are not fewer than ten pairs of parallel rails, and again to the west of the station towards the Dutch frontier. Thus Dalheim, from an unimportant halting-place, has become a point of concentration of great strategical importance. The stations east of Dalheim, viz., Wegberg and Rheydt, have also been provided with extra sidings wholly in excess of any local requirements. It is not concealed that these facilities are intended for military purposes only.

Ruremonde has a Dutch garrison of under 400 men, and there are no supports within any reasonable distance. It is said that the Dutch Government intends to increase the force by a battery and a few hundred men, which would be practically useless. If the Dutch meant seriously to defend the place, they should have a battery and a cantonment on the left side of the Meuse commanding the bridges, and not a small garrison uselessly quartered in the town of Ruremonde itself, where it could be taken by surprise and compelled to surrender at discretion. The point of importance is that neither at Ruremonde nor anywhere else along the railway is there any possibility of serious resistance being offered to the advance of, say, 30,000 German troops on board the trains collected between Gladbach, Rheydt, Wegberg, and Dalheim without anyone being a bit the wiser. This force would be merely the advanced guard of the army entrusted with the task of seizing Antwerp, if it could, or at least isolating it from the rest of Belgium.

Enough has been stated to show that on two important lines deliberate preparations have been made for throwing large German forces into Belgium with the minimum of publicity. Troops drawn from the interior of the country would be carried swiftly and secretly to the appointed spots, and in a single night Germany would secure the passage of the Meuse at Ruremonde on one side, and the important junction at Gouvy in the Ardennes at the other. This would be the first application of the new strategical principles for invading a country with an army conveyed to its destination by a succession of trains for which the necessary sidings

had been duly prepared beforehand. The information recorded shows that this has already been done at the places enumerated. An old Walloon friend (a German citizen) asked me interrogatively during my last visit whether I had not found that the Belgians were afraid of what was coming, adding emphatically they have reason for their fears. ("Les Belges ont peur, n'est ce pas?" "Ils ont raison.") At Stavelot and Viel Salm I can vouch for the fact that the people live under the shadow of what seems to them an imminent catastrophe.

When, therefore, German politicians and writers declare that the policy of their country is peace, and that aggression is not in their thoughts, it may be well to consider the facts which have been set forth in these pages, and which cannot be explained away. They are admittedly preparations for war, and for a war of aggression. The invasion—or perhaps it would be better to say the over-running—of Belgium is being arranged on systematic and scientific principles. Not the slightest attempt has been made by Belgium to baffle the design which becomes obvious the moment the details are examined on the spot. The Belgian Government is publishing its impotence by allowing the German line to cross the frontier at Stavelot, and still more by constructing itself the tunnel which will enable German trains to run through on to the Belgian system, and reach Gouvy and Libramont before the "*alerte*" is given to the French cavalry at Sedan. The British and French Governments are apparently too much occupied with theories to attend to the practical details on which the Germans know how to concentrate their efforts and attention. There is still time if they put themselves to the least exertion to prevent the tunnel being made at Stavelot. With the smallest encouragement it would be quite easy to raise such a local agitation against the project that the Brussels authorities would be bound to listen to the remonstrance of those on the spot who realise the danger of the hour. It is idle, however, to blame the Belgian Government for its complaisance to Germany when neither we nor France take any steps to stiffen its limited capacity for resistance. A prompt move now may suffice to bring to nought one of the most astute steps Germany has taken of late in the way of preparation for martial contingencies.

GERMANY AND HOLLAND*

WHILE the best-informed persons at both The Hague and Brussels agree in treating the alleged letter from the Emperor William II. to Queen Wilhelmina in 1904 as apocryphal, the discussion in the Dutch Chambers on Baron Heeckeren's question has drawn attention to the somewhat delicate and difficult position which Holland occupies in the European family, and before interest in the so-called incident has waned, it may be useful to contribute some pertinent information to the study of a question of recurring vitality and acuteness. It is many years since a French writer compared the relations of Germany and Holland to those of the wolf and Little Red Riding Hood in the fairy tale, but the little maiden still fares to the market unharmed, and the wolf has not yet shown his teeth. There is, perhaps, more risk in this case of the wolf being introduced as a friend and installed as protector of the family than of his forcing his way in by the indulgence of his voracity. At least such seem to be his own desire and expectation.

There is one essential fact that must be fully grasped and carefully remembered by those who endeavour to appreciate the present position and to predict the political future of Holland and its close neighbour and half-brother Belgium—for their fate cannot be dissevered—and this is that Holland is not a neutral State. I lay stress on this point because the *Post* of Berlin in a recent important article declared not merely that "Holland was a neutral State," but that "England had created her neutrality," and the article was extensively quoted in our Press without a line of correction anywhere. Without accuracy in facts it is difficult to see what profitable discussion can take place

* *The English Review*, May, 1910.

on grave political matters. The words of the *Post* apply with literal accuracy to Belgium, but not to Holland. What is the exact significance of the difference? It may be expressed thus: Holland possesses entire liberty of political action beyond her frontiers; in other words, she can conclude alliances; Belgium is restricted to the defence of her territory and neutrality, and if she were to make an alliance in anticipation of events she would commit *ipso facto* a breach of the engagements contracted in 1831 and finally ratified in 1839 as to her being "a permanently neutral State."

Let us now revert to the year 1904. It was the year of the Russo-Japanese War, and, so far as Holland was concerned, more specifically of the Dogger Bank incident, and of the problem of preserving Dutch neutrality at her ports in the Indian Archipelago during the passage eastwards of the Baltic fleet. The Dutch authorities had then some reason to be anxious, and the fact that England was the ally of Japan could not be overlooked in their calculations. Moreover, the feeling aroused by the Boer War, although waning, had not yet passed away, and those in the Chamber and the Press who preferred co-operation with England to union with Germany conceived it to be prudent to keep silent. The precautionary measures adopted by Holland in 1904 would, therefore, have been susceptible of an anti-English interpretation without attributing their origin to the sinister advice of the German Emperor. As a matter of fact Holland did take some steps in the direction of her military and naval defence in 1904, but they originated before that period in a general awakening of public opinion in Belgium as well as Holland to the fact that little States would have to fight for their independence and not trust to the forbearance of Great Powers to respect it.

What followed? In Holland the new law enforcing the conscription and abolishing the volunteer system, so far as the infantry was concerned, was put into force, and the practice of a partial mobilisation each year was adopted. The latter measure was restricted to the zone of Amsterdam's defensive position, which includes the command of the two channels of the Rhine near Arnhem and Nimeguen

respectively. The same practice has been adopted ever since—the Dutch annual mobilisation being exclusively one to test the efficacy of the defence of the approaches to the commercial capital. There is no reason then to attach special importance to the mobilisation at Westerwoort-lez-Arnhem in the summer of 1904.

The possibility of a naval attack on Amsterdam from the side of the Zuyder Zee had, for some years before 1904, been present to the minds of Dutch military authorities, but curiously enough the general impression, in 1900 at least, was that Germany and not England might deliver such an attack. The efficiency of the defence of the Texel was challenged, and at the same time it was pointed out that there were no ships ready at a moment's notice to co-operate in the defence of the entrance to the Zuyder Zee. The consequence of this movement of public opinion was that the forts at the Helder received new and more powerful guns, and that an elaborate system of searchlights was installed. These precautionary measures were far advanced towards completion, if not actually completed by the end of 1903. The really important addition made in 1904 was in the matter of naval defence. In November of that year a measure was passed to the effect that there should be ready for active participation in the defence of the Zuyder Zee and the North Sea Canal a squadron of the minimum strength of six cruisers, and a large but unspecified number of torpedo boats. This step, which must be regarded as essential to the defence of Amsterdam against any attack, provides what may be called the modicum of fact in the present allegation that Holland adopted in the year named measures of defence which might be interpreted as directed against England.

We have seen what Holland did; let us now turn to Belgium. In February 1904 an order was issued from the Belgian War Department that a commissioned officer should sleep every night in each of the twelve detached forts round Liège; before that order officers of the day had always returned to the city as soon as their perfunctory duties allowed of their quitting the forts. Far more important than the adoption of precautionary measures at Liège was the decision arrived at in 1906 to complete the

long unfinished outer circle of forts at Antwerp—the bulwark of Belgium's independence—and to re-arm all the forts in that place with the newest and most powerful artillery. Antwerp is now fully equipped to resist attack and to fulfil the rôle assigned to it in the defence of Belgium.

But Belgian preparations were not restricted to these measures, which would have been of dubious effect with the skeleton battalions that represented the national army. The question of increasing and improving that army represented the next phase in the development of the question, and at last it was taken up in a serious spirit. A project for providing the country with an efficient force divided into two classes, one of 98,000 men for the defence of the three fortified positions of Antwerp, Liège, and Namur, and the other for the provision of a field army of 100,000 men with adequate reserves, was drawn up in 1904 by authority and freely distributed under the inspiring name of Groeninghe, which recalled the most famous Flemish victory. The whole country irrespective of party was stirred by the appeal.

Perhaps in a few years' time some one will make a pretended revelation that the impetus given to Belgian preparations which began in 1904 was due to external pressure. For the moment it seems more reasonable to assume that the Bill, finally passed into law last year, which embodies Groeninghe's scheme, was the outcome of the aroused consciousness of the Belgian nation as to their true position.

Many far-seeing Belgians, like the late General Brialmont and M. Emile Banning, had insisted on their country's need of greater military strength more than twenty years ago. Their voices were then "as of one crying in the wilderness," and it was with something of the bitterness of the unheeded prophet that Banning wrote: "A nation only loses its independence when it subscribes in advance to its own ruin."

I will now venture to summarise a few general conclusions. To tell the plain truth there is no great fear in Holland of German aggression. No one at The Hague believes that an incursion into the Netherlands forms part of German plans. Even the few who do not subscribe

absolutely to this view limit their apprehensions to the province of Limburg, which intervenes between Germany and the undefended strip of Belgium east of Antwerp, and generally known as the Campine. Some Dutch thinkers also dread a silent absorption by Germany rather than an open aggression, and point as proof of their argument to the increase of German residents at both Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where the population is said with some exaggeration to be already half German. But the fear of a silent absorption never yet led a nation to take up seriously the questions of military reform and home defence.

Far different is the view in Belgium, where the fear of German aggression on the advent of any international trouble in Western Europe is acute. Rightly or wrongly, Belgian military men assign a very prominent place in the strategical plans of German Generals to an advance across Belgium, and so long as their army remained in a disorganised and lamentably weak condition they held that it would be futile to attempt to prevent it. But the recent organic changes are reviving a more hopeful feeling, and the pleasing theory is again coming into fashion that if Belgium is sufficiently strong to make a good fight in defence of the inviolability of her territory no one will dream of attacking her, and that in any collision between her powerful neighbours her neutrality will be as fully respected as it was in 1870.

Much has been written on the subject of Belgian neutrality promulgated by the Five Powers constituting the London Conference in 1831, accepted by Belgium at the time of her creation and recognition, and finally embodied in the treaties of 1839. This position did not exempt Belgium from the common duty of all States to provide for their own self-defence. Rather may it be said that it made the duty all the more incumbent upon her because she had to discharge her obligations to the guarantors as well as to herself.

Finally, with regard to the possibility of future co-operation between Holland and Belgium, a few words may be said. A most gratifying and encouraging approximation between the two peoples has been noticeable for the last ten years. It has become absolutely clear that the ill-will

naturally engendered by the break-up of the old kingdom of the Netherlands in 1830-2 has passed away, and that Holland and Belgium are now reunited by the ties of brotherly sympathy which have not existed since the sixteenth century. Short of a military alliance no question arises nowadays between them that is not promptly settled to their mutual satisfaction. As to a defensive alliance, however, nothing can or will be done in the present phase of affairs. Belgium is debarred by her status as a neutral Power from concluding alliances. Holland, believing that she is in no danger of aggression, sees no necessity for making one, and if she ever were to depart from this passive attitude the alliances she would form would necessarily have to be with more powerful countries than Belgium. But the rapprochement of Holland and Belgium is none the less one of the most genuine and encouraging national movements visible in Europe at the present time, and its moral effect, reposing of course on proper military arrangements for home defence in each country, must contribute towards the safety of the whole of the old Netherlands.

FLUSHING AND THE SCHELDT*

AS I am warned by good friends in Holland that extreme criticism of the projected fortification of Flushing will only strengthen the position of the philo-German party in the Netherlands by enabling it to say that England is interfering in Dutch affairs and seeking to restrict that nation's independence of action, it will be well to commence this examination of the Scheldt question with the statement that I have long been known for my friendship to Holland, and that I appeal to that section of the Dutch nation which has not succumbed to German temptations to second my efforts to remove a probable cause of differences and quarrels between two friendly Powers which would be provided by the execution of the new Dutch coast defences. There is another Power more directly concerned in the matter than even England. This is Belgium, and as the reader will see in the sequel, she has rights which Holland herself has recognised and invested with special validity. Belgium has treaty rights, she has what I should like to call a still stronger claim in that good-neighbourly feeling which promised in recent years to develop into a Hollando-Belgian Entente Cordiale. Is Holland prepared to destroy that expectation?

In deciding to fortify Flushing—the vote has not yet passed the Dutch Chamber—it is permissible to think that The Hague Government has had in its mind the idea of fortifying the southern extremity of its coastline rather than the consequences of that fortification to the unrestricted freedom of the Scheldt as the Belgian and international water route to “the commercial port” of Antwerp. If the Dutch people demand who has the right to veto their fortifying Flushing, a negative reply must be given in their favour, but a far wider issue is raised by any new circum-

* *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1911.

stance that would diminish or imperil the unrestricted freedom of the Scheldt, which we must not forget, was established as long ago as 1831. It was established in the first place, not by an agreement between Holland and Belgium, not by their first treaty of the 19th of April, 1839, nor by their second treaty of the 5th of November, 1842, but by the decree of the London Conference in its several protocols of October, 1831. It would be futile for anyone to attempt to deny that the construction of an up-to-date fortress, with bomb-proof casemates and cupolas and heavy artillery, at Flushing would be a new circumstance of the gravest significance.

It is not surprising that Belgian opinion should see in this undertaking a veiled design to revive the old Dutch pretension to close the Scheldt, a pretension which was for nearly three hundred years a substantial fact, arbitrarily fettering the commercial and maritime development of Antwerp. Tenacity has always been a Dutch characteristic, and when it is borne in mind how deeply Amsterdam and Rotterdam have always felt and resented the competition of Antwerp, the conclusion cannot be rejected that Dutch opinion would welcome any chance of reviving the lapsed privileges of the Treaty of Munster. Nor is the Belgian apprehension on the subject likely to be allayed by the accumulating evidence of the desire of a great Power like Germany to throttle all foreign navigation on its rivers despite the historic clauses (Articles 108-17) of the Treaty of Vienna declaring such navigation to be free, and the precise stipulation of the Convention abolishing the Stade tolls on the Elbe in 1861. At its own doors it has an object-lesson in the neglect of the Dutch Government to do anything to improve the navigable channel of the Meuse between Venlo and Visé, as to what a selfish neighbour holding a river in common can do to render it useless to the State which holds the interior position. But for that systematic policy of the Dutch Liége would be the centre of as great a maritime trade as Ghent or Cologne. For Belgium, however, all riverways pale into insignificance beside the necessity of keeping the Scheldt open and beyond possibility of closure. The Dutch Government may protest to the skies its good intentions, but Belgians can

only see in the construction of a modern fortress commanding the four-and-a-half-miles' wide entrance to the Scheldt the doom, sooner or later, of Antwerp.

To understand the basis of Belgian fears at this moment the history of Dutch pretensions with regard to the Scheldt must be passed briefly in review, and in order to appreciate the position of which it is now expected that Belgium shall tamely risk the loss, this first study must be supplemented by a careful examination of all Holland contracted to do in 1839 and 1842.

The story begins in the sixteenth century, when the Northern Provinces of the Netherlands achieved their independence and the Southern remained with Spain. In 1609 the first treaty of peace was signed between Spain and the Netherlands (Holland), but the Spanish diplomatists by an inexcusable blunder omitted to stipulate that the Scheldt, the high waterway to Antwerp, should be left open to navigation. The Dutch said nothing. Their fleet commanded the channel; they knew they could do what they wished. They simply did not allow ships to enter or leave the Scheldt, and Antwerp slowly perished of inanition. Having established the fact in practice, the Dutch took advantage of the next European peace (that of Munster in 1648) to establish it in law by securing from the Powers the ratification of their right to close all the channels of the Scheldt, and to deny ingress to the ships of the whole world. Every subsequent treaty ratified the clause in that of Munster.

France is entitled to the credit of having first challenged this intolerable pretension. In 1792 her troops occupied Antwerp, and the first act of the new Government was to declare the Dutch control of the Scheldt "a survival of feudal tyranny and a violation of the rights of man." Two years later Holland passed under French influences, and the Scheldt necessarily became free. The Treaty of The Hague between Holland and France in May, 1795, contained a clause enacting "the freedom of the Scheldt," and the people of Antwerp celebrated the event with much rejoicing.

During the whole period of the French *régime* the Scheldt remained free, and when the Vienna Congress

united Holland and Belgium in one Netherlands kingdom, it naturally followed that the Dutch could not close the Scheldt to their fellow-subjects the Belgians. But in 1830 the Belgians revolted against Dutch rule, and one of the first retaliatory measures of the King (Queen Wilhelmina's great-grandfather) was to blockade the mouth of the Scheldt, and to revive all the old pretensions under the Treaty of Munster and its successors. This step was a little too much for the Powers then assembled in conference in London, and they ordered "the raising of the blockade" as a violation, not merely of the Treaty of Vienna, but of the general rights of all the Powers. King William yielded on paper to the protocol, but maintained the blockade in practice. Eventually, however, he gave way, and the principle was established that the powers, not less than the Belgians, had a right to veto what was called "the Dutch shutting the Scheldt." It ought not to be difficult to show that a new Dutch Portsmouth at the mouth of the Scheldt would be the most effective means of "shutting" it that human ingenuity could devise.

We may now pass to the tortuous and protracted negotiations for concluding a peace between Holland and Belgium which began with an armistice in November, 1830, and ended with the treaty of April, 1839, concerning ourselves only with the Scheldt question. In the first draft treaty accepted by the Powers, and known as the "Eighteen Articles," the Scheldt is not specifically named. It is included in the provisions of Article 7, which read:—

"Art. 7. It is understood that the regulations of Arts. 108 to 117, inclusive, of the General Act of the Congress of Vienna, relative to the free navigation of the navigable rivers, shall be applied to those rivers which pass through the territories of Holland and Belgium."

This Article lapsed with the instrument of which it formed part. In October, 1831, the Eighteen Articles were superseded by the Twenty-four Articles, which eventually became the definitive treaty of April, 1839, still in full force. The 9th Article, which is of the greatest importance at the present juncture, reads as follows, and contains very precise stipulations about the Scheldt:—

"Art. 9. The provisions of Articles 108 to 117, inclusive, of the General Act of the Congress of Vienna, relative to the free navigation

of navigable streams and rivers, shall be applied to the streams and navigable rivers which separate or traverse simultaneously the Belgian and Dutch territory.

“As touching especially the navigation of the Scheldt, it shall be agreed that piloting and buoing, as well as the preservation of the channels of the Scheldt below Antwerp, shall be under a common supervision; that this common supervision shall be exercised by commissioners named for this purpose on both sides; that moderate pilotage dues shall be fixed by common agreement, and that these dues shall be the same for Dutch commerce and for Belgian commerce. It is likewise agreed that the navigation of the waters intermediate between the Scheldt and the Rhine, for going from Antwerp to the Rhine and *vice versa* shall remain reciprocally free, and that it shall be subject only to moderate tolls, which shall be provisionally the same for the commerce of both countries.

“Commissioners shall meet on both sides at Antwerp within the space of a month, both to fix the definitive and permanent amount of these tolls and to agree upon a general regulation for the execution of the provisions of the present Article, and to comprise therein the exercise of the right of fishing and the fishing trade along the whole extent of the Scheldt on a footing of perfect reciprocity in favour of the subjects of both countries. Meanwhile, and until the said regulation be fixed, the navigation of the navigable streams and rivers above-mentioned shall remain free to the commerce of both countries, which shall adopt provisionally on this head the tariff of the Convention signed on March 31st, 1831, at Mayence for the free navigation of the Rhine, as well as the other provisions of that Convention so far as they can apply to the navigable streams and rivers which separate or traverse simultaneously the Dutch territory and the Belgian territory.”

The text of this Article is indisputable in giving equal rights and common control to Belgium and Holland in regard to the whole course of the River Scheldt below Antwerp. At its mouth Holland holds both extremities at Flushing and Breskens, but the rights of Belgium in the open way of the river are absolutely equal with those of her neighbour.

But in order to appreciate the full significance of Belgian rights it is necessary to examine the protocols, and to see what happened between the drafting of the Article as just quoted in October, 1831, and its acceptance in the binding treaty of April, 1839. Holland did not waive her rights without a long struggle, and her proceedings were not free from artifice and guile.

In March, 1838, the King of Holland gave way, and notified his acceptance of the Twenty-four Articles, whereupon direct negotiations were commenced between Holland and Belgium for the conclusion of the definitive separation treaty embodying them. The contest for the definition

and carrying out of the principles of possession in common, and reciprocal freedom with regard to the Scheldt, provided a keen tourney of wit and ingenuity between the Belgian and Dutch negotiators, in which the Belgians did not come off second best. The story is told in the protocols of the Dutch-Belgian Treaty, which do not seem to be well known in this country, but which furnish the key to the whole question.

The Dutch proposed to settle the common control of the river by dividing it into two parts. They said to the Belgians: You take sole charge of the river down to Lillo—ten miles below Antwerp—and we will do the same from Lillo to the sea. The Belgian representatives must have smiled at this latest proposal for “the Dutch shutting of the Scheldt.” A few years’ neglect of the river below Lillo, the construction of a few apparently innocent works of art in Dutch Flanders, would have sufficed to render the lower Scheldt useless for navigation by ocean-going ships. The Belgians countered the proposal with the demand that in the event of the lower Scheldt becoming closed by “natural events,” or by “artificial works,” the Dutch were to provide a fresh navigable channel for the Belgians to the sea, and it was the Belgian view that prevailed. The Dutch proposal that the pilots were to be of their nationality was also negatived. The nationality was left optional. Finally, the tolls which the Dutch proposed to collect at Flushing were to be levied at Antwerp and Terneuzen, the latter at the mouth of the Ghent canal. The question of the tolls is no longer of importance, because they were redeemed by the Brussels Conference on July 15th, 1863. The point to be remembered is that all these proposals were attempts to establish the superior claims of the Dutch over the Scheldt. They were all repelled to the triumphant vindication of the principles of “common possession,” “common control,” and “reciprocal freedom.”

What is still more interesting is that during these very discussions the case of the approach of a friendly force to the aid of the Belgians in Antwerp was brought up, and the theory was laid down and accepted that the Dutch were bound to remain passive while the friendly succour

passed unmolested up the Scheldt. We do not find that this admirable theory was completed by the addition of the words, "even if Holland and Belgium should be at war," and we may conclude therefrom that the most excellent and explicit of treaties is, after all, not superior to human nature. The reservation applies to the present situation. Who believes in the Dutch allowing a relieving squadron to pass unmolested by a remodelled Flushing if they did not wish to do so, because by formal treaty and international law the Scheldt is a Belgian waterway? At present they would not think of stopping such a force because their batteries at Flushing, Breskens, Terneuzen, and Elewoutsdyk are insignificant. But when cupola forts and the heaviest guns are substituted for these batteries, who will vouch for Dutch moderation then?

The utmost that has been said during the recent discussions in the Dutch Chamber with the view of appeasing Belgian apprehensions, for which Dutch opinion does not seem to have been quite prepared, was that it did not necessarily follow because Flushing was to be fortified that the Dutch would oppose a force friendly to Belgium coming up the river. It does not seem to have occurred to these Dutch advocates that the material fact of aid reaching Antwerp in an hour of need being dependent on Dutch goodwill, could only mean cold comfort to the Belgians. At the present moment there is no hindrance to its arrival if asked for and wanted. The new fortifications at Flushing will impose a hindrance. How can it be contended then that the Belgians should not be disturbed? How can it be represented that the common rights of the two countries in the Scheldt are not about to be annulled? The Dutch are going to close the Scheldt in the most effective way known to man, by constructing a fortress at its entrance that could only be captured after a long and successful siege.

Even if the proposed fortification of Flushing were not objectionable in itself, the arguments used in the Dutch Chamber to justify the scheme would invest it with suspicion. Serious legislators at The Hague have declared that the fortification of Flushing will protect England against Germany, and Germany against England! This

rôle of buffer between two mighty empires, we may say without intending offence, seems to exceed the power and duty of Holland. It would be wiser if she concentrated her attention on the defence of her own frontiers, and with regard to duty if she thought only of her obligations to her nearest land neighbour. They have even declared that Belgians ought to receive the news of the fortification of Flushing with grateful feelings, because it will defend Antwerp against her enemies on the side of the sea. They omit to add that the definition of who are enemies and who are not will rest with Holland. Let the matter be wrapped up in the most specious phrases that Dutch philo-Germans can discover, the broad and brutal fact remains that the fortification of Flushing will wrest from the Belgians the hard-earned rights of the last century and reduce Antwerp to a state of tutelage in the interests of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The arguments advanced from the military side of the question are so puerile that it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that the true reason in the minds of the Dutch is of a commercial order. It is only the latest form of their old desire to close the Scheldt, and thus hinder the formidable and increasingly successful competition of Antwerp with their own great seaports. What is surprising is that they should think they could hoodwink the Belgians by such a thin device.

It is not unnatural perhaps that Germany's friends in Holland should endeavour to buttress up a case for fortifying the coast, and especially its southern extremity, and for neglecting the eastern frontier, by dilating upon the old aggressions of France. When diplomatists have a weak case it is not unusual to turn to the armoury of historical facts and precedents, out of which evidence in support of any theory can be extracted, but in this twentieth century it is really rather silly to try to shape public opinion by citing the warlike ambitions of Louis XIV. and the great Napoleon. We live in the present age, not in past centuries, and the fact that stares everyone in the face in the estimate of the balance of power for the peace and preservation of the existing divisions of Europe, is the increasing strength of Germany. This is formidable enough without little States like Holland being seduced from the loyalty they

owe themselves and their neighbours in order that they may subserve schemes, of the inner motives of which they know nothing, and over the consequences of which they can exercise no possible control. Even if the scheme for fortifying Flushing be withdrawn, and there is at this moment only too much reason to think that it will not be withdrawn without strong outside pressure, much mischief has been done by its promoters, who have caused Dutch policy to be regarded with suspicion in both London and Paris, and created a rift in the cordial relations of Belgium and Holland.

Unfortunately, there is too much reason to believe that the matter will not be concluded with even this qualified result. The Dutch Government seems determined to go on with the bad business, and, of course, those who like to fish in troubled waters will encourage their obstinacy. Already we have rumours of a secret treaty between Germany and Holland promising military support for the defence of the forts when built, and although the treaty may be apocryphal, such an assurance would not fail at the opportune moment to be forthcoming. In making fortifications that would be injurious to the interests of everybody else except Germany, the Dutch or any other Government might feel sure of receiving German support unless and until major considerations intervened. The Dutch ministers will be stimulated by every available argument to assert the independence of their country by offending England and Belgium without benefiting themselves.

In these circumstances both Belgium for herself as the principal party concerned, and England and France as the tutelary Powers who promoted the freedom of the Scheldt, should concert together and take measures in support of each other's separate action to bring home to ministers at The Hague the unfriendly and uncalled-for nature of the steps they propose to take at Flushing. Their consequence must be to render nugatory all the rights won not merely by Belgium but by all the trading nations in the freeing of the Scheldt. In 1863, for instance, England paid over half a million sterling as her share in the amortisement of the Scheldt tolls. She has a right to a voice in the new

arrangement which would make the lower Scheldt an exclusively Dutch river. In a crisis, what value would the paper charter of the Scheldt as a free way to Antwerp have in the eyes of the Power which, either for itself or in the interests of another country, commanded the entrance to the river with powerful batteries and cuirassed forts? The protest will have to be very loud and very firm, or the fortifications at Flushing will complete that chain of fortified positions which now confronts our eastern coast from the Elbe to whatever point Dutch complaisance may place at the disposal of Germany.

If remonstrance and protest fail at The Hague there will be good reason to deplore the shortsightedness shown in 1830-1 in refusing to listen to the Belgian demand that Dutch Flanders should be included in the new kingdom of Belgium. Dutch Flanders (that is, *Flandre des États*) should be part of Belgium. Its geographical position, as well as its past history, entitled the Belgians to its possession, which would have given them the left bank of the Scheldt. It might not be inopportune to remind Holland of the consideration shown her in this matter eighty years ago. If nothing is gained by appealing to Holland's good sense and neighbourly feeling, it will only remain for Belgium to invite a conference of the Powers who took part in the liquidation of the Scheldt tolls in 1863, for the purpose of discussing how far the proposed fortification of Flushing would contravene the spirit of treaties and hinder the freedom of the Scheldt, which is a right belonging to all trading nations.

PEACE OF EUROPE* (2)

ALTHOUGH it is very probable that when these lines appear in print there will be no room for talking of peace, I have adopted the same title as was given to a previous study of mine of the European situation which appeared in this review a few years ago. As it is an attempt to get at the causes of the prevailing tendency to stifle discussion, the actual occurrence or non-occurrence of the war that now seems imminent becomes of little or no importance because the main conclusion is that war is sooner or later inevitable, and that great issues have arisen which can only be settled by the sword.

It is no new saying that war is nearest at hand when there is most talk of peace and when the Pacifists are most confident in the arrival of the Millennium. Perhaps this is attributable to the unreasonable character of the expectation—seeing that Europe, without going further afield, resembles an armed camp—or perhaps there may be some Higher Power, which, taking a just view of man's pretensions to perfection, conceives it necessary to correct and chastise his vanity. And after all, if war in the old fashion had its dark side, is there not some reason to think that the social strife which we have seen, and with an aggravated form of which we are still threatened, may prove darker? Strikes, sabotage, picketing are only brutal appeals to force, and have none of the redeeming features of a war waged for the greatness of one's country, the preservation of our colonies and commerce. Man is not, and never will be, perfect, and the nations that lose the sense of patriotism only cumber the earth, and deserve to disappear, be their past greatness and their present prosperity what they may. What is more to the point, they are

* *United Service Magazine*, October, 1911.

certain to succumb. Long before Rome fell the handwriting was on the wall, and the end in sight. Is it the same with England to-day? Germans say it is, and their contempt for English character and power is one of the causes that has mainly led to their recent proceedings.

The disturbing element to the peace of Europe has been for years the magnitude of German ambition. Not content with having the best-organised and best-composed army in the world, Germany longs for the same supremacy at sea. Not very successful herself at creating colonies, she wishes to get them ready made. She can only get them in this way by vanquishing England and appropriating those that belong to her. So long as these views and aspirations are to the fore in Germany—and they are at present in increasing force there—a good understanding between England and Germany resembles the polite preliminaries that pass between the lamb and the wolf, or the unarmed traveller and the footpad. Germany is out for plunder. The only obstacle in her path is the English Navy, and she has got nearly level with it for the purposes of a single campaign—a one year's war—in the North Sea.

With this exordium to commence with, let us look a little wider afield. Germany has a great impulse, a motive force behind her. She has clear aims, and she has almost, if not quite, the power to carry them out in the teeth of every one. On the other hand, England has no aims. She asks to be left in peace to enjoy what she has, and that is precisely what all other nations, more or less, envy her. They would not mind the British Empire falling with a crash to the ground if they were sure that they were not also to suffer. German ambition is so ruthless and insatiable that all the liberal-minded nations have satisfied themselves that the downfall of England would be only the first step to their enslavement. But for this a European combination against England would have been quite conceivable.

And if England has no aims, it is dubious whether France has any either. The cult of *la revanche* has long been out of fashion. Gambetta's words, "N'en parlez jamais, y pensez toujours," have lost their force. To rouse the passion for *la gloire*, which inspired French soldiers under the oriflamme the fleur de lys, and the tricolour would

need a military genius and a series of brilliant successes. France, like England, has her own internal troubles. The excess of liberty has produced a social riot which may paralyse the arm at the critical moment.

It might be thought that Russia, having the same advantages as Germany in one-man rule, would have a clear goal before her, and that she at least would know what she wanted; but this does not seem to be the case. Her policy is too dispersed. Her attention is fixed on questions of the fifth order of importance, instead of those of the first magnitude. Persia is an instance. All England and Russia had to do was to sign a twenty-five years' treaty: "We agree to debar all other Powers from interfering in Persia for this period, and we are both of us going to consider our own convenience, and nobody else's in the interim." Instead of this, Russia has concluded a separate convention with Germany, which unquestionably ties her hands, and may lead to further disputes. In comparison with what is happening in Europe, anything that may arise in Persia is of the fifth order of importance. But it is not only in Persia that Russia has tied her hands. She seems to have done something very similar in the Balkans. In Manchuria and Mongolia she is credited with being ready for a fresh war, but in Europe she seems less ready. If Germany knew that Russia was prepared to throw three millions of men, as she could, across the Vistula and into Galicia, we fancy she would be less provocative on the Belgian frontier. Russia has always laboured under a disadvantage in the matter of rapid concentration. She has added thereto by scattering her forces and by multiplying the objects under her attention.

On the other hand, Austria seems to have become infected with the same ambitious longings as her northern partner, although we may have to wait for their full revelation until the accession of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. She wants "her place in the sun" also, and if that means a colony, we do not see why France and England should not try and accommodate her *on conditions*. It would count for something at Vienna to show that favours can come elsewhere than from Berlin. In the same way Italy has secret longings. Surely France and

England, her friends, could ascertain what they are and think of some way of gratifying them. Germany is ready to do some bargaining to keep Italy in the fold of the Triple Alliance. Is it impossible for us to do some better bargaining to get her out of it?

Until that has been effected we must regard Europe as divided between the two opposing forces represented by the Triple Alliance on the one side and the Dual Alliance, plus the Anglo-French entente, on the other. The entente has stood the test of time so well that perhaps we are not going too far in speaking of one Triplice against another. The English and French peoples are certainly at one in thinking that a German triumph would mean their decline and possible downfall. To avert such a calamity they are prepared to spend their last shilling and their last man. Eighty millions of the most civilised people in the world are not likely to go under if they only make no mistakes in dealing with an opponent which may be civilised in some aspects, but which in war will show itself as ruthless as the Hun.

The peace of Europe rests in the hands of the members of the two Triplices, and everybody recognises that the one to which England is attached is wholly pacific. Of the other, two of the partners, at least so long as Francis Joseph lives, are pacific. Consequently, of the six Powers, only one can be labelled as set on war as the means of attaining its ends. This is a heavy responsibility, and from the manner in which she bears it, it is clear that she is prepared to outrage public opinion in order to attain her own ends. She admits that she is swayed by no higher motive than self-interest, and a supreme selfishness is her only God. If there were a European Areopagus, Germany would be voted the enemy of all.

But if there is not an impartial and controlling assembly, there is at least a bar of public opinion outside the six Great Powers to which an appeal can be made, and from which efficacious aid might be obtained in upholding justice and national independence. There are fourteen other states in Europe, and some at least of these might play a considerable part in the matter. Unfortunately, Turkey, the most powerful of them all, and undoubtedly

a great military Power, seems to have been gained over by Germany. Her military zeal and her indebtedness to Germany for military counsel have led her astray. Besides, there is considerable resemblance in the German and Turkish way of looking at an appeal to arms. There is nothing in it that shocks their mind. Even Frenchmen, the most martial race of former days, no longer contemplate war except as a dread alternative to dishonour and effacement. In a somewhat similar manner Roumania must be placed in the same category, for she is already associated with the German Powers.

Twelve states remain, and only one of these may be considered likely to attach herself to Germany. I mean Sweden. The eleven others are certainly opposed, if not to Germany directly, at least to her methods of action as displayed in Morocco. Here is a bar of public opinion from which Germany would receive scant consideration if they felt sure of indemnity for the consequences of their judgment. Civilisation, culture, and true liberty are as highly developed among them as in the greatest states. Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland are in all points the equals of Germany, except in military power, and they represent a total of twenty millions of people. Their voice should count. It would count if they would only make an effort to support it with deeds.

If we assume that the resources of the two Triplices are fairly equal, the only safe conclusion is that the result of a great struggle between them will be indecisive. There will be losses here and gains there, but we do not believe that, for one side or the other, there will be a repetition of the crushing blow of 1870-71. An enormous waste of life and a prodigious expenditure will probably only avail to leave the situation very much where it was. The best chance for giving it a more decisive turn lies in the introduction of the three independent nations whose names have last been mentioned, for the co-operation of the three little states named would probably give another aspect to the struggle. They are not indifferent spectators of the crisis, for they know that while larger issues are to the fore, their own fate hangs in the balance.

As it is not at all probable that Holland would be very

prompt in coming to a decision, although a German invasion of Belgium would cause much heart-searching in that country, her action and policy may be left for consideration in the last place. Belgium is the state most immediately concerned, and she will not be able by the force of circumstances to evade making a prompt and clear revelation of her plans and purpose. There seems no reason to doubt that the very first episode of the war will be the invasion of her territory by one or more German armies. No one can doubt for a moment that among the Belgian people this outrage will rouse a deep and enduring resentment. If the Germans succeed in crushing the French and English, the resentment of the Belgians will not greatly matter; but if they are defeated, or if their success is partial, they may have good cause to remember it.

But if Belgium is the most directly menaced by the outbreak of a Franco-Anglo-German war, Switzerland also has to face the contingency with grave anxiety. Her turn might not come till the second phase of the war, but it would come all the same, and she is only prepared to wage a defensive war on a restricted portion of her territory. For defensive war she is not without a good chance of success, but she has no means of assuming the offensive, and under no circumstances would the Swiss take part in the invasion of any one else's territory. On the other hand, the Belgian army, should the tide of war roll into Germany, might very well be incorporated with the Franco-British for purposes of an offensive move, and the exasperation of the Belgian public at an unprovoked invasion would make such a step far from unpopular. It is the attitude and action of Belgium that is for the moment of the chief importance after that of the Great Powers. Let us concentrate our attention on the point. It is a very vital question for England and France as well as for Belgium herself.

When we speak of Belgium we must remember that there is the Belgian Government and also the Belgian people. The Belgian people, both Walloons and Flemings, are entirely in favour of France. "*Nous n'aimons pas les Allemands,*" is a common observation in Flanders and Hainaut, as well as Liège. Antwerp, it is true, is the seat

of German influence, and some have called it already "half a German city," but one may reasonably doubt whether the mass of the Antwerpers have any love for the Germans. The tendency of political life and thought in Belgium is more and more towards liberalism, and France represents its ideal and champion. If ever the occasion arises to make a national decision, the Belgian plebiscite will be overwhelmingly favourable to France.

With regard to the views of the Belgian Government, we have no positive means of arriving at a conclusion. They are wrapped in a little mystery, and it is quite possible that they have not definitely and irrevocably made up their mind on the subject. Opportunism is regarded in Brussels as one of the most statesmanlike qualities, but there comes a moment in all questions when the clear views that can alone prompt a wise decision should be formed and brought into evidence. Nobody knows exactly what the Belgian Government means to do. It wishes, of course, to be let alone and to have no critical decision forced upon it; but if it cannot have its wish, what will it do? The Belgians themselves are in great doubt on the subject, and certainly no thoughtful Belgian can feel satisfied with what is being done in the way of preparation for the serious contingencies that are now looming close ahead. It seems, to me at least, that Belgium is going to repeat the blunder of August, 1831, wholly due to over-confidence, and, as Leopold I. said, she "would not survive a repetition of that mistake." The Belgian Government is turning a deaf ear to its true friends, and listening to the sinister advice of its most formidable enemy. What it does not seem to have the faintest notion of, is that its views are quite out of harmony with those of its own people. If the time should come when the shortcomings of the Government were clearly responsible for national calamities, the Belgian people would call their rulers very severely to account.

There are a few points on which emphasis may be laid. Belgium is bound to do her best to defend her own territory, but no one has ever supposed that she has the strength or the means to do so alone. Her duty is to call in her friends to aid her; but if she does not call them in, and in good time, she incurs the charge of neglecting her duty.

It will be no excuse or defence if she responds, "We thought we were strong enough to stand alone." It is perfectly obvious that Belgium has not, and never will have, this strength; and any one who tells her the contrary is not her friend.

We can only hope that eventually Belgium will follow the true course suggested by her own interests and her past history. That course is cordial co-operation with France and England, the two Powers that presided over her creation and admission to the family of nations. Why should she display such a tender regard for German feelings? She has nothing to thank Germany for. If she were to aid Germany in her plans, no one would more bitterly regret it. The triumph of Germany would signify, not merely the loss of her independence, but the stifling of her individuality. But she would be committing another and more serious kind of blunder if Germany were not to triumph. She would have to reckon with those who considered her defection an act of ingratitude to them.

The peace of Europe is menaced because Germany is pining for a world-wide dominion. She is a formidable military Power; but that is not enough. She wants to be supreme on the sea as well. She has built up a fine navy, but it has done her no good. Instead of satisfying her, it has created an interminable feeling of restlessness. There is a greater fleet at sea. It bars the way to universal dominion. It is the only obstacle to it. These are the sentiments that are impelling Germany to stir up a war which will probably rage throughout the world before it is over, and that must have the greatest consequences for humanity. It is as clear as the day that, despite the alleged progress of mankind, war can be forced upon us at any moment by a potentate or a people set on the attainment of their own ends in defiance of all considerations. Such a moment seems to have arrived.

The question of international peace has become a matter of wider interest than in past centuries. New factors have been introduced into the problem. It is no longer only Europe that has to be taken into account. The balance of power has to be thought of, but in the scale must be also

placed the United States and Japan. Do the Berlin authorities think that America will not have her say in the matter? Distance is being annihilated, and Germany flatters herself if she thinks that the United States will stand by while a new aggressive force is brought into being on the eastern shoreline of the Atlantic. The first naval reverse to England—which has yet to occur—would be the signal for the American battleships to steam for Europe. The German dream of ocean dominion is unattainable. It would be a menace to everybody, and therefore the whole world will combine against and destroy it. No one can be in any doubt as to German procedure—she has given us too many object-lessons—and it is beyond doubt that the realisation of her plans would place everybody else in bondage. This is too clear for doubt to exist about it on either side of the Atlantic.

Other considerations might induce the Japanese to claim a right to intervene. They are the allies of England, and they have a very chivalrous estimate of the duties of an alliance. But they also have entered the family of nations, and it is their strongest ambition to establish their right to the place. A German triumph would react on the position in the Far East just as much as it might on the Panama Canal. The wisest course has always been found to lie in preventing a contingency happening rather than in preparing to deal with it after it has arisen, and the Japanese have shown much wisdom. Under special circumstances, they would not be backward in joining in our Old-World quarrels, and a quarter of a million of their soldiers would be a very useful help in the defence or recovery of Belgium. It is unnecessary to say more. If peace is preserved, Germany will do well to remember that new factors have come into being since 1870, and that they are against her. If peace is broken she will have reason to remember the fact before long.

From whatever point of view the international position is regarded, it seems impossible to place any firm reliance on the preservation of peace much longer. The pretensions of Germany can only be made good by the sword, and she has full belief in her military power. But there are other eventualities now. Until the recent attempt at dictation

from Berlin, France was the most pacific state in Europe. She did not want war; her influence was always on the side of peace. Germany did not give her credit for fine sentiments or good motives. She set it down to her being afraid. The whole corps of German officers agreed that France admitted her military inferiority. The German is by character a bully, but when he thinks the other side cannot retaliate he gives full play to his domineering instincts. Germany had convinced herself that France would not show a firm upper lip. Did she not dismiss M. Delcassée five years ago? In the interval Germany had grown so much stronger. France would never fight—so the *Berlin* was sent to Agadir.

But in this Germany went too far. The French Government had received an affront, but it preserved an attitude of politeness. It took counsel with England, and it received assurances that English support would prove as firm as a rock. The Germans were too much occupied in their own designs to remark that imperceptibly the French attitude had stiffened, and that France confronted the possibility of a fresh contest with Germany as a not unlikely contingency. When the German authorities did perceive it—an occurrence happening at the moment these lines are being penned—they described France's plain declaration that she would defend her honour as "a defiance of Germany." The signs, then, are strongly in favour of war, one provoked and precipitated by Germany for her own ends, but before it is over she may have cause to regret her ruthless decision. From the German point of view, obviously no one has any rights but Germany, and we are all "to be bled white" because we stand somewhat in her way. But even if war is averted now, a collision before long must be regarded as inevitable. France has recovered some of her old and natural confidence in herself. The cult of the *revanche* has been revived; the recovery of the lost provinces is once more an ideal. Forty years of peace have been obliterated, and the passions of a wounded people have been again brought into play. Germany has roused thoughts by her action that she never condescended to take into her calculations. Even if Germany draws back now, and that is the only way of maintaining peace, the day must come

when France will rise as one man and cast her threats in her teeth.

The most interesting of the actors in the European international play is Italy, because no one feels confident as to the part she intends to play. She is Germany's ally, but she is not bound to help her if she undertakes an offensive war. If Germany attacks France, then, Italy can look on. But if she looks on, Austria, the third partner, will not; and then follows the further query—what would be the relations of Austria and Italy, the one fulfilling her part in the triple compact, the other holding back? It does not seem at all likely that, under these circumstances, harmony could exist between Austria and Italy. Italy could not afford to incur the risk of standing alone. She would be bound to gravitate to the other grouping. But rumours are already current that Italy is to receive compensation in Africa, and that when Germany is satisfied her claims there are to be brought forward. We shall see. The game of compensations being once started, it is difficult to assign a limit for it, or to exclude fresh claimants from time to time. All we need say is that it will be a blunder if Italy is allowed to think that she gets what she may get as Germany's ally rather than as the friend of France. Countries, like individuals, always adhere to the more profitable connection. It would not be a bad stroke to promise Italy all Germany's African colonies when we have to take them from her.

Whatever other points may remain obscure, there is one clear consequence of the recent crisis whether war ensues or not. The rivalry of England and Germany is brought into the limelight. It is England who has baffled Germany, and Germany has retired for the moment, because she is not ready for the naval war. But she will now turn all her efforts to getting ready, and inspired by the bad passions which the Press vituperation of England has aroused, the German people will provide the money to raise the German fleet to a still higher point of power and efficiency. This will entail a still further effort and resolution by England. In the end the situation will have to be faced, that sooner than continue a ruinous competition a clear issue will be raised, and Germany will be challenged to stop or fight. There is already sufficient exasperation

in both countries to make this course seem a prudent one to follow. The question of men has to be faced, as well as that of money. Germany has superior resources in men, and her wiser fiscal policy makes the foreigner contribute much of the cost of her new navy.

As time progresses the rivalry will come more and more clearly into view. The Hohenzollern policy is progressive. It fixes on its goal, and it works laboriously to reach it. In the last twenty-five years Germany has created a formidable-looking fleet. We do not know its true power. It may be weaker than it looks; it may be stronger. But it has one element of strength: it has been created solely for war with this country in the narrow seas. There is no waste of force about it. It is a machine forged for a specific purpose, and there is no room for doubt on the subject. It is a question for serious consideration how long a man or a nation is bound to remain passive while a rival, in the full light of day, is making every preparation to put an end to his or its existence. The day will come when this intolerable position must cease to be, and our greatest risk is that we may wait too long.

THE KNELL OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE*

THE action of Italy in Tripoli produced by its suddenness a shock on the public mind of this country which for the moment disturbed the clearness of its vision and of its reasoning power. The lovers of Peace—and we are all lovers of peace if combined with honour and freedom from peril—saw in it an aggravation of the international disturbance created by the still unsolved Moroccan question, and they have been somewhat free in their censure of Italian action. It is one of the worst habits of the typical Englishman to criticise and censure others, and to do so in ignorance of the facts and without sufficient consideration for the feelings of foreigners. That the Italians should be the object of this perverse criticism is especially regrettable when we remember how cordial our relations have always been with them, and with what loyalty the Italian Press and people, alone among all Continentals, refused to take any part in the diatribes passed on this country during the South African War. When all the circumstances of the case are known and examined no level-headed person will doubt that Italy acted in September, 1911, from those imperative material considerations which compelled England herself to act in South Africa towards the close of 1899.

At the same time, the human mind being naturally inquisitive, the Italians will give us permission to make a little not unfriendly investigation into the causes that made them act at this particular moment, and to discuss the probable consequences of their action on the international situation in Europe.

* *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1911.

It may perhaps clear the ground to point out that Italy has been generally admitted to possess reversionary rights over Tripoli ever since France asserted her protectorate in Tunis thirty years ago. Those rights have been recognised in official engagements, not merely by France, but by England also. In Tripoli Italy had been given a free hand. It was on that basis that she became a party to certain naval combinations in the Mediterranean which, to put the point plainly, could not be considered as harmonising with the intentions of the Triple Alliance. Italy was at liberty to do this without breach of faith because, as I stated three years ago, the conventions between the three Powers constituting the Alliance relate exclusively to land and not to naval operations. The moment for deciding when Italy should convert her theoretical rights in Tripoli into realities was one entirely for her judgment and decision. She decided to act now, and she is entitled to claim, not merely that she had good reasons for acting, but also the full and frank acquiescence of those who had long ago given her in anticipation their assent.

There remains, however, the piquant question, why did Italy act at this particular juncture when Europe was just laying aside her apprehensions of war? Italy, too, did not merely talk of war; she went to war, and her artillery began to speak before editors had collected their thoughts. The Italian Government has drawn and circulated its case for the information of lookers-on. There were heavy faults on the part of the Turks, Italy could show a long list of grievances, and no one can say in face of the facts cited that Italy had not received provocation. And yet while we accept the case as a good one we feel instinctively that the true cause of Italy's prompt action lies behind it. It is a secret that may not be imparted to the world for some time to come.

Let us take, in the first place, the simplest explanation, which is that Italy acted entirely for and by herself alone. *Italia fara da se*. She has had paper rights in Tripoli for thirty years, but she had never done anything to enforce them. Might they not be imperilled, if not weakened, by continued abstinence? A new phase of the scramble for Africa had commenced, and Italy was restricted to the

rôle of a spectator; and yet among the papers in her Foreign Office were the protocols of France and England acceding to her occupation of Tripoli. Is it surprising that with the occurrences in Morocco before her eyes, and with the possibility of German intrusion in interior Africa, Italy should decide that there was not a day to lose in making good her reserved rights in Tripoli and its hinterland? No doubt she could have entered into negotiations with Turkey, but they would have proved, as no one can doubt, wearisome and futile. She preferred to follow the short and sure road of an ultimatum and the *fait accompli*.

Let us turn for a moment to Turkish proceedings since the installation of the new *régime*, for in them may be found some further explanation perhaps of Italy's action. The policy of the Turkish Government since the fall of Abdul Hamid has been, with scarcely any concealment, provocative. It has aimed at the extension of Islamic power in Arabia, Africa, and Persia. Under German instigation it has striven to thwart English interests, to undermine English influence, and to pave the way for the supersession of English power at many points, and notably at the head of the Persian Gulf. It has used Tripoli as the gate into the Saharan regions, where Turkish troops have encroached on French territory, and the emissaries of Constantinople have been preparing the way for a Jihad or Holy War. If Turkish authority in Tripoli had become strengthened by an increased garrison, the general arming of the tribes and a stirring up of religious fanaticism, it would necessarily have followed that Italy's paper rights over Tripoli would become less freely recognised and more difficult to assert. Time counted in favour of Turkey and against Italy. The Italian Government may well be pardoned for deciding that it could not afford to wait any longer.

In face of the situation created by Turkey's own policy, no one will doubt when history supersedes contemporary comment that the Porte precipitated Italy's action and made it more uncompromising. At the same time, these considerations do not eliminate the possibility that Italy may have acted in Tripoli, if not at the instigation, at least with the encouragement of one of her allies. It would

only have been natural that Germany at the time of her move to Agadir should have given Italy some explanation of her plans and some fresh assurance that, whatever happened in Morocco, she had, as already arranged, the reversion to Tripoli. Indeed, it will appear inconceivable that she did not do so when it is remembered that at that very moment the preliminary conversations for the renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1913 had already begun. At the time that Germany sent the *Berlin* to Agadir she was confident of an easy triumph, and she looked forward to a repetition of 1905. But the Agadir mission has proved very much of a *coup manqué*. Things have not gone at all as Germany anticipated, and the prospect of her obtaining anything like full satisfaction is growing more remote.

Italy apparently does not see why Germany's disappointment should be passed on to her. A change is in progress in Morocco, the political status in Northern Africa must be affected thereby, and the hour for making good Italy's paper rights in the same sphere had obviously arrived. There was no reason whatever for waiting, as Germany had given a prior assurance that she would regard Italy's move into Tripoli as the complement of her own into Morocco. International love, even among allies, is not so great that Italy should forego the chance of going straight ahead because the German train had got off the main line and run into a siding. Germany, however much she is embarrassed by the action of her associate, cannot reproach her or repudiate it because she would be confronted with unpleasant disclosures which would not read well in Constantinople. Without claiming to exhaust all the piquant details of the secret history antecedent for some months past to Italian action in Tripoli, we conceive we are not far from the truth in alleging that Italy has acted within her reserved rights, and that she knew very well that none of the Powers could or would object to her enforcing them.

A very interesting and suggestive problem is placed before us by the Italian descent on Tripoli, accompanied, as it seems to be, by a sort of Turko-Italian war. It has several aspects, and will be judged somewhat differently in Paris, London, and Berlin. Let us put the French view first. An Italian occupation of Tripoli was an accepted

fact in the political situation. Whether it came now or in the future did not matter to France, which on this question had no *arrières pensées*. This fact explains the perfect calm and equanimity with which the news of Italian action was received in Paris the other day, in striking contrast with the first emotional utterances of the English papers. But we cannot doubt that this reasonable frame of mind was due to the careful calculation that the Tripolitan adventure of the southern neighbour would inevitably prove a point in France's favour. There is no ground for thinking that Italy has a very arduous task to accomplish, but at least for some years a very considerable garrison will have to be maintained in Africa, and there will be quite enough activity and outlay to keep the Italian people occupied for a long time. Moreover, Italy's communications with Tripoli must be by water, and as it would be absurd to pretend that she is the equal in naval power, even with the dubious aid of Austria, to France and England in the Mediterranean, it follows that her obvious policy is to be on good terms with those Powers. We make bold to declare that, whether she intended to do so or not, Italy has just given hostages to fortune that in the days of Armageddon she will be on the side of France and England.

Without looking so far ahead, France had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Italy, well occupied in North Africa, would be a less aggressive neighbour on the Alps. One of the partners in the Triple Alliance had gone temporarily or permanently out of the business to attend to more pressing matters at a distance. For many years after her great trouble the luck had been dead against France. The Triple Alliance formed in 1883 threatened to efface her, but she waited with hopeful fortitude, and her turn came with the Alliance with Russia. France again raised her head, but there remained the dubious question of the relations with England. That dark cloud on the horizon was removed by the *entente cordiale*, better and more to be trusted than paper treaties; and now at a critical moment in European history the pressure on the Alpine frontier is relaxed, if not entirely removed. We cannot yet say that the Triple Alliance is dead, but its knell seems audible to the ear.

The point of view in London was necessarily different. We have not to be ready to mobilise the manhood of our race on two exposed frontiers at twenty-four hours' notice. We are not given to making very careful calculations beforehand as to the combinations of possibly hostile or friendly forces in any sudden emergency. Our way of conducting politics is somewhat haphazard, and certainly unscientific. Consequently there was nothing to cause surprise in the first remarks on Italy's action in our Press being characterised by an emotional irritation, and not by any serious effort to weigh and measure the true significance of what was taking place. The vague and elusive "peace of Europe" was imperilled, and for a while no one seemed to see that an event had occurred which materially turned the scale in favour of our side. Peace, which has no meaning unless there is behind those who uphold it a preponderance of power, was rendered more assured by an act which, however it may be concealed or patched, constitutes the first serious breach in the Triple Alliance.

But the situation for this country, it was declared, was exceedingly embarrassing and dangerous on account of the large number of Mahomedans within the Empire. We do not need to be reminded that the King-Emperor counts more Muslims as his subjects than the Sultan of Turkey, but this argument cuts both ways. If they are his faithful loyal subjects it is a contradiction in terms to appeal to Islamic solidarity as a justification for our interfering in a matter that does not concern us, and which we have always regarded among the things that must some day inevitably happen. But the Mahomedan leaders here and in India exclaim that Italy has declared an unprovoked and unjust war on Turkey, and that if we do not hasten to extricate the Sultan from his difficulty by quarrelling with our excellent friends the Italians we shall forfeit their esteem. We may reasonably hope that the Indian Mahomedans have more sense than to act so childishly. We ourselves have had to wage war against Sunni Mussulmans, and to invade their territory as in Afghanistan. We have several times had to warn the Porte itself that encroachments at Koweit and in the Sinai peninsula would entail our declaring war on Turkey. We are in practical possession of

Egypt—an old Turkish possession. We smashed the Khalifa, who was certainly a pillar of Islam. We did all these things without forfeiting the loyalty of India, and yet in comparison with any one of them the Italian descent on Tripoli is a small affair. How could we with any face at all say to Italy, "You are doing a very wicked thing in Tripoli," when we have ourselves done far worse? The Indian Mahomedans must show a little of that good common sense which has been so conspicuously absent at Constantinople.

It will do the Indian Mahomedans no harm to ask them to seriously consider some simple facts. As British fellow-subjects we have a great deal of good feeling towards them, and we have rejoiced at seeing evidence that they were going to devote their attention to educational questions so that they might raise their community socially and intellectually. But we can have no sympathy whatever with pan-Islamism, which would be the gravest possible menace to the British Empire, and we must firmly repel the suggestion that because the Turks are of the same creed as the Indian Mahomedans there is any call on us to go and help them through their troubles, whether our general policy points that way or not. The contrary is nearer the truth, and it might be argued that in expecting us to intervene in an affair which does not primarily concern us these Mahomedan leaders are themselves committing a kind of veiled treason to the British Empire, under which they enjoy so many advantages that their Turk co-religionists do not share.

Let us, however, offer them such consolation as the situation justifies. The loss of Tripoli will not make Turkey any the poorer or weaker. It will close an outlet for wasted force. The Mahomedan population of Tripoli will be just as free to follow their religious exercises under Italian rule as they were under Turkish. They will have the advantage of lighter taxation, and as Italy will stimulate trade and industry there will be more money to pay it. It cannot be doubted that the Tripolitans will be very much the gainers by the Italian annexation, just as has happened in those parts of the old Muslim empires which have passed under the sways of England and France. But

the Mahomedans are not satisfied with material considerations. They put forward a claim for moral injury. The dignity of the Sultan has been abased, and the descent on Tripoli is represented as the first scene in a drama which is to witness the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, and the conversion of the faithful Muslims into gangs of wandering Jews.

It is rather difficult to treat this argument seriously. The sixty or seventy million Muslims subject to our rule have revealed no errant inclinations. They have remained with remarkable constancy in the places that knew them. And if there is a plot to expel the Turks from Europe, surely the remonstrances are misdirected when sent to London. Ought they not to be dispatched to Berlin and Vienna? When this crisis springs up in the Near East it will be time enough to discuss and judge the action of this country. At the present moment we are only considering the Tripolitan question, which in itself is a very small affair so far as the Mahomedans are concerned. What we wish the British Mahomedans to remember is that their view of the situation is only one element in the problem, and that for the moment it is not the most important element. It has to be taken into account, but we must be allowed to shape our course by considerations nearer home.

We return then to the point of supreme importance, which is, how does the independent action of Italy—a member of the Triple Alliance—affect the European interests of England and France and the balance of power in this continent? There are two tests by means of which something approaching a sound opinion may be arrived at. How has Italy's action been received in the capitals of its political partners? Has it given satisfaction in Berlin and Vienna? The second test should be equally valuable as an indication. Has it made Italy a more useful ally in the Triple Alliance, or a more formidable foe to France and England? These are practical questions concerning which a considerable quantity of independent evidence is available. If attention is fixed on them there should be some chance of forming reasonable opinions about the events that have already taken place, and those which will occur as the position develops.

Let us apply the tests and give the answers that seem most reasonable and correct at the moment of writing. Italy's action was freely denounced in both Berlin and Vienna. She was accused of taking this step without paying any regard to German interests and susceptibilities. She put Germany in such a false light at Constantinople that she contemplated intervention to avert the war until Italy announced to all the Powers that she would not accept intervention. While Germany saw loss of prestige and risk to her railway projects in Asiatic Turkey, Austria was alarmed lest Italy meditated following up her step in North Africa by a corresponding move in Albania. In Vienna Italy was denounced even more strongly than she had been in Berlin. Surprise, resentment, and even jealousy were displayed because it was alleged that Italy had in acting for and by herself stolen a march on her partners. These were the first honest and outspoken opinions of the two German capitals. In them we discern the truth.

But a little reflection sufficed to show the need of restraint and circumspection. The two German Foreign Offices knew very well that Italy was not merely within her rights, but that she held proof of prior sanction. The continuance of a censorious attitude in the Press could only result in the weakening and possible destruction of the Triple Alliance, whose thirtieth birthday was so near at hand. The German Press then have trimmed their sails. Italy's moderation is extolled because she has promised to do nothing to inflame the Balkan peoples, and significant remarks are made to the effect that the war will be very brief, and that an opportunity will soon present itself for Germany to intervene between the belligerents. So long as it is Germany that intervenes there is nothing to be said against the proposition, but Germany's game is to lure this country into that invidious position so that hereafter she may be able to assure the Italians that it was England who wished to fetter their action and thwart their plans. Our only safe attitude is that of the calm spectator who takes good note but keeps his own counsel.

But if we apply the second test we find still stronger reasons for benevolence in judging Italy's decision to

occupy Tripoli. Whether intentionally or not, she has made herself less efficient to perform her duties under the Triple Alliance, and less formidable as a nominally hostile neighbour to France. The most lively imagination could not conceive Italy going to war with France at a time when she has 40,000 of her best troops in Tripoli, with their communications always liable to be severed by the squadrons of England and France. For the moment Italy has ceased to be a useful member of the Alliance, and it can hardly be doubted that this point is fully appreciated at Berlin. At some future stage of the question every one will recognise that Italy's bellicose action was an extraordinary and quite unexpected contribution towards the maintenance of general peace, so gravely threatened by Germany's aggressive attitude not only in Morocco but on the French frontier.

There remains the more general question, What will be the bearing of the Tripolitan incident on the chances of the renewal of the Triple Alliance which falls due in the spring of 1913? The Italian Premier, Signor Giolitti, declared the other day, just before the expedition set sail, his "absolute loyalty" to the Alliance, and in the state of European nerves at that juncture he could not as a reasonable man have dropped another thunderbolt among the affrighted nations by announcing that Italy was going to part with her old friends and seek new ones. He fully realised that no one would have thanked him for such a declaration at such a moment. He made the perfectly proper announcement that his Government was "absolutely loyal" to its allies and also fully in harmony with its friends, and without attempting to penetrate into dark places it is better to accept the declaration as it stands. But Italy by planting herself in North Africa has taken up a new position in which her own interests will compel her to act in harmony with England and France. She has not annexed Tripoli in order to lose it. When her present allies are urging her to look to the Alps much of her attention must be turned to Cyrenaica. Facts are superior to words, and even to promises.

It is inevitable then that Italy must become a less efficient member of the Triple Alliance. If peace is preserved she

may not refuse her signature once more to an instrument which she, at least, has always regarded as a bond of peace, but there is an end to the chances of Germany's succeeding in her repeated efforts to give an offensive force to what was always, and still remains, a purely defensive engagement. Italy will remain a member of the Triple Alliance on the understanding that she is only required to go to war with France in the event of that Power assuming the offensive against Germany, but as this is never likely to happen Germany may well ask herself what is the practical value to her of the Italian alliance? The present Triple Alliance may be described as either a sham or a phantom.

Under these circumstances Germany will very anxiously look out for a third partner upon whom she can more implicitly rely than upon Italy. She imagined she had found it in Turkey, but Italian precipitancy has hampered her plans and added to her anxieties. The Turkish alliance was, and is still, no doubt to be had, but the quarrel with Italy must first be decently settled. Then the Balkan nationalities have to be taken into account. They will certainly not be on the same side as the champions of Turkey, and if they are severely pressed there is Russia in the background to assist them. Germany has been fishing in troubled waters so long that it is edifying to see her overtaken by Nemesis after all. The wiseheads of the Wilhelmstrasse must be hard put to it to know which way to turn. In one direction they see an old ally slipping away from them, or at least taking up such a guarded and reserved attitude as to be of little practical value in the realisation of their best-laid schemes. In the other direction they are confronted with the risk of alienating a friend and possible ally who would be much more attached and devoted and who would enter heartily into grandiose schemes. But they see no way of securing the Turkish alliance in exchange for the Italian without bringing new factors into the problem which would count as a serious set-off.

The only way out of the difficulty for Germany is to strain every effort to restore peace, to prevent Italy slipping away from her alliance without alienating Turkey, and perhaps to recognise that for herself a period of penance

has dawned. Only four months have elapsed since she went to Agadir in the full belief that she could browbeat France and cajole England, and now she finds that the cards have turned against her, and that "the 'Ercles' vein" is not exactly suitable to the occasion. Fortunately for her, perhaps, the desire for peace is so genuine and general that no one will seek to interfere with her efforts towards repentance and self-effacement.

AN ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE*

NO serious student of international politics can dispute the fact that the *entente cordiale*, due to the tact, good feeling, and statesmanship of his late Majesty Edward VII., has brought the French and British nations together in a sense and to a degree that not so many years ago would have seemed impossible. This approximation was due not to the adoption and use of a happy phrase, but to the discovery that the two peoples had identical interests in common, not on second and third rate matters, but in regard to the paramount considerations which underlie their position as the two leading civilised countries of Europe. On many occasions in the last eight years the fact that England and France stood side by side has alone preserved the Continent from bloodshed. But an *entente* is only an irregular and therefore ephemeral bond. It would not be held good enough by Germany, Austria, and Italy for their compact; it does not suffice for that between Russia and France, and how, then, could it be deemed sufficient for the agreement to which France and England—moved by common apprehensions, and, if so ordinary a quality guides statesmen, by common-sense—came despite the mutual prejudices of the past? The *entente cordiale* was obviously only a transition stage to something more definite and unqualified. If it had proved a failure, which no one will now venture to allege, it would have signified an irremediable breach between France and England; as it has not proved a failure, it is clear that the time has come to convert the *entente* into an alliance.

The natural inclination of Englishmen is in favour of superb isolation. Foreign alliances are regarded by many as mere continental entanglements. Politicians when they

* *National Defence*, May, 1912.

are forced by events to make an alliance are always most anxious to find some plausible excuse for their departure from insular tradition. When Lord Lansdowne concluded the alliance with Japan his chief care was as to how the country would take it. And yet history might be searched in vain to find a country that had derived more benefit from opportune alliances than ours. It was the failure of our diplomatists to bring the German Powers—absorbed in the partition of Poland—into a league against France and Spain that lost us our North American colonies 125 years ago. We have no reason to look dubiously on continental alliances once we discover where our interests lie, and how they are to be protected. Alliances have been repeatedly to our benefit and advantage; their absence in at least the one memorable instance referred to involved us in national humiliation and heavy loss.

If a wise decision is to be arrived at in the present critical phase of European history we should consider the question of ententes and alliances as mainly a business proposition, not, however, altogether ignoring those considerations of sentiment which influence nations as well as individuals. Political arrangements are not concluded between mere automatons. Patriotism, a sense of honour, the impulse of glory still count as something distinct from and superior to the balance in the ledger, or the sense of ease in one's armchair. But the fundamental principle at the root of an alliance is community of interest. We ally ourselves with another country because much of the separate interests of the two dovetail with each other, and in acting together the essential needs of both are secured and attained. That may be called the alliance that aims at some specific advantages, and is more or less offensive. But there is another alliance which is purely defensive. It is that formed against an aggressive military State which might prove too strong for any single adversary, and which is only to be prevented from becoming a menace to the whole world by the wise and timely combination of its intended victims. That is the contingency with which France and England have to deal, and we must hope that they will both have no more pressing thought than how best to provide against it together.

An alliance with France need not be made in secret, for the reasons dictating it are obvious to any one who will take the trouble to look at the present situation in Europe. The centre of Europe is occupied by two military nations numbering 115,000,000 people, and possessing armies of over six million men. Both of those States are bent on a policy of expansion, not merely in Europe, but across the seas. They have associated with them as an ally a third Power—Italy—of nearly forty millions, whose ideas are also towards expansion. There are some reasons to hope that Italy may change sides, but for the moment it would not be safe to say more than that there are internal influences at work pulling her in opposite directions. But even if Italy be eliminated from the Triple Alliance, the German Powers represent such a combined force as has never existed on the Continent at any former epoch, except in the uprising of the nations against Napoleon. This force is prepared and organised not for defence but for offence. Both at Vienna and Berlin the first principle of strategy is the immediate transfer of the scene of war to the territory of the neighbour designated for attack. Railways have been specially constructed to enable troops to be poured up the valleys of the Meuse and the Moselle on one side, and down the valley of the Vistula on the other. Never has there been such a concentration of power; never such a carefully elaborated scheme for the employment of power in what it is imagined will prove an irresistible offensive.

If we turn to the other side of the problem what do we find? In the first place, France occupying the place of peril, exposed to the full brunt of the storm, with a very fine army, it is true, but only forty millions of people. In the second place, there is France's ally—Russia—a State with enormous potentialities, but handicapped for the struggle that looms in the near future by her size and her inadequate internal communications. It is most probable that the vigorous Austro-Prussian offensive will put her out of action for several months, and during those months France would stand alone as the guardian of Western Europe if there were any backsliding or hesitation in this country. Germany has the means of striking her blow at

once and at any chosen moment. The only force that can deliver the counter blow with equal celerity and effect is the British Fleet. France standing alone at the point of danger and honour looks to England. Is she to look in vain?

The *entente cordiale* has existed for ten years to give encouragement, but it is somewhat nebulous. The breath of suspicion, the element of doubt, threatens from time to time its existence, and as the formula is not binding the opinion is not strange that it is regarded as easy of change and even repudiation. We, in a position of comparative security, think lightly of contingencies, but France, at the point of danger, is more concerned with them, and cannot help being disturbed at seeming indications of levity and inconstancy. The value of an *entente* is in the obligations it imposes. If there are no more serious obligations than waving flags and toasting healths it is a valueless understanding that must collapse amid derision. If there are obligations, as there have been for specific occasions, the *entente* amounts to an alliance, and its clauses and conditions should be made as clear and specific as those between France and Russia, or between the members of the Triple Alliance.

Let us return to the consideration of the aggressive forces in Europe, for it is here that the true reasons will be found for the closest possible combination between France and England. If there were no aggressors these two countries might remain content with the ordinary relations of two friendly neighbours. An *entente* would be a needless exaggeration of words; an alliance directed against no visible peril would be meaningless. But the facts are too well ascertained to admit of any doubt that force is still the controlling element in the world's destiny, and that those who wield the greater power and know best how to use it will exercise sway over the rest. Last summer Germany was ready and prepared to strike a blow at France. She held back because she learnt that England was ready to join against her on sea and land. There was another reason. Neither Austria nor Italy was inclined to embark on an offensive adventure. But for days and weeks even the German army was ready to burst over the frontier,

and when it was balked of its anticipated prey its mood became one of savage fury against this country, for it was we who had stood in its path. That was an instance of the good accomplished by the *entente*, and it should be appreciated by lovers of peace, for never was Europe nearer a terrible and devastating war than she was last August. But, while properly appreciative, it will be well to remember that even the *entente* might not then have averted war if there had not been at Vienna an aged ruler whose feelings it was desired to spare. The time cannot be far distant when that powerful peace factor will be no longer available, and in the disappointed and exasperated mood of the German army it would not be prudent to reckon on a fresh exhibition of self-restraint.

Admitting the presence of the aggressive forces, which cannot be seriously disputed, we may take up the consideration of the purposes for which they have been created and the objects they are destined to attain. In Germany it is admitted that France has risen from her calamities, and that she possesses a formidable army. Before Germany can dictate to Europe that army must be accounted for. Germany realises that it will be a severe struggle, but she is convinced that with the assumed rapidity and perfection of her attack coming off she will be the victor before Russia's co-operation can be made effective. This conviction is based on the other assumption, that British intervention might also be retarded by any of the causes that sway an ignorant democracy or a party-driven administration, until it also would be more or less inoperative in preventing the one main object of the war, which is the smashing of the French army and the acquisition of the Vosges fortresses. In all this sequence of thought German optimists assumed that this country might for a certain number of weeks be held spell-bound while they were accomplishing their will in Lorraine and Champagne. Last August they learnt something that made them conclude that their calculations were faulty. England was not disposed to look on while the fate of France was being decided, and the intervention of England means for Germany the granting of the necessary time to bring Russian armies west of the Vistula.

The German Government made use of the golden bridge left at its disposal to retreat by, and since then it has set itself the task of discovering how it may disarm British suspicions and ensure British inaction at the next crisis. We must be clearly understood to mean by this the negotiations and intrigues of the German Government, and not the manifestations of the German people, which is frankly and brutally hostile and defiant. But the Hohenzollern policy has always been based on careful prior calculations since Frederick burst with 60,000 of the best-trained Infantry in Europe on the unprepared Maria Theresa, and perpetrated the first of its countless robberies in Silesia. Its present calculations are to disarm English suspicion, to bring about Anglo-German discussions and agreements, and then to spread disappointment, and even resentment, at our proceedings in France. It is such a simple game, and the Englishman (as distinct from the Irish and the Scots, who are neither so credulous nor so forgiving) is such a *bon animal*, or rather simpleton, that up to a certain point he will help forward the game that is intended for his own discomfiture and ruin.

It is unfortunately true that there is a very considerable section of the English public who, not alive to the main drift and object of German policy, are averse to war with that country, and who learnt with something little short of dismay last September that we had been within an ace of it. This sentiment set in motion a project or plan for promoting a better understanding with Germany, and this was the more easy because the Emperor William has always enjoyed the reputation of being better disposed towards us than the bulk of his subjects. We have to recognise the existence of an organisation for manufacturing friendship between England and Germany, and, of course, it would follow that if the accord—another *entente*—were established Germany might count on a little more latitude when she next falls foul of France than she was given last year. The movement is in full swing at the present moment. England is so free from earth-hunger, so generous with the possessions of weak Powers which do not belong to her, that she is even willing to buy a little peace in this way by resigning herself to the rôle of spec-

tator. The idea is like this: The German bear is in a savage mood; let us offer him cakes! The weak point is that his appetite is insatiable.

It so happens that the contrition of the British Government at having spoilt one of Germany's best laid coups promises to subserve the new arrangements to ensure the triumph of its sequel. Wilfully and of its own accord it is going out of its way to make Germany believe that we are all rather sorry for what we did last August, and that we intend to try not to do it again, and to give a more convincing air to our repentance we are offering bribes in Africa and Asia. It is rather pitiable, and might even do a great deal of harm, if behind the German Emperor were not the German people brutally self-confident, devoid of tact, and clamorously vaunting their mastery over the rest of Europe. We should be afraid of special visits to Berlin if there were not the candour of the German Press to show us exactly what Germany wants and how she means to get it *per fas et nefas*.

As the value of a close treaty alliance with France is to be ascertained by a careful appreciation of the extent and nature of the danger from Germany to both countries, no clue to the real character and tendency of German policy should be ignored. We have on the one hand the extraordinary and unexampled development of naval power, until Germany has attained a fighting strength not so very far short of that of England's for a first contest, let us call it, in the North Sea. The comparison of ships is often made, but the supply of men to work them is generally ignored, nor does it seem to be realised that Germany possesses a naval reserve numerically larger than ours, and that the total *personnel* of her fleet (active and reserve) is almost on a level with our own. Germany has, then, the men to make a bid for the mastery of the seas. She has also the ship-building capacity necessary for such a struggle and for sustaining it. She has the two best naval harbours on the North Sea, where as yet we have none. But this development of naval power is only a commencement. It falls very far short of the full plan that German aspirants to command the seas have in reserve. Why is it still in reserve? Because the French army has yet to be

reckoned with. Let that obstacle be removed, let a new Frankfort treaty impose on France a limited army and an open frontier, and there will be no hindrance to Germany's doubling her naval expenditure by the saving on her army, and increasing its *personnel* to half a million men by conscription. This is a real, and not a conjured-up danger. The Emperor William has sometimes been considered desirous of emulating Frederick the Great. A comparison with his ancestor Frederick William I., who prepared the means for his successor's triumphs, would seem more appropriate.

What is the true moral for us of these contingencies? It is that the French army is as much the bulwark of this country as the British navy is the complement of the defences of France. So clearly is this fact appreciated in Germany that there is a new school of politicians who are urging the Government to propitiate England by a temporary suspension of naval activity, and to get ready to crush France by passing heavier army votes and increasing the annual contingent. And it is even believed by these persons that the British public is so credulous that it can be hoodwinked into preserving the attitude of a disinterested spectator of current events until active intervention might seem both useless and too dangerous.

We may refuse to believe that the desire for peace and the disinclination to break definitely with Germany—a people, if not a State, with which England at least has old ties—will so blind any Government as to induce it to play second fiddle in a Berlin concerto, and yet we cannot be surprised if the French people see in "special visits" to the German capital reason for disappointment and misgiving. Nobody has yet had cause to say that, whatever their other shortcomings, British statesmen are unscrupulous; on the other hand, that character has always belonged to Prussian diplomatists; our French friends may be pardoned, then, for thinking that in a discussion or an arrangement between such parties we are likely to get the worst of it, and that our discomfiture, even if self invited, must react on the objects and duration of the *entente cordiale*. There is only one way out of the difficulty, and

that is the conversion of the *entente* into a regular alliance, and so we return to our starting point.

No one can be so foolish as to wish that, if there is to be goodwill and cordiality between us and the French, the *entente* should not be of the greatest possible use and value whenever such a crisis as that of last summer again confronts us. From the practical point of view the best of undertakings is meaningless if when the crisis arises nothing is to be done. That was not the interpretation we placed on the *entente cordiale* last September. Are we to believe that the present interpretation is different? This apprehension has caused much suspicion and heart-searching in France, where the old view is again finding expression that England is only the false friend who cannot be trusted. If we could only find sufficient evidence that England is alive to the formidable menace ever growing in dimensions on the other shore of the North Sea, we would tell France that England cannot be false, because her own existence and that of France are bound up together; but we regret that the evidence is not sufficient. There are nearly as many among us to believe in the good faith and goodwill of Germany as to realise the facts as they stand. But trust and confidence do not debar us from making suitable arrangements. Russia is the ally of France, but that has not prevented friendly relations between St. Petersburg and Berlin; an alliance between England and France would not hinder us in cultivating the goodwill of the Germans; it would only place the transaction above board as being subordinate to our accepted and declared obligations towards our ally. That would put our conduct beyond suspicion. We could never be blamed for doing more than anyone else to assure the preservation of peace; what would be blameworthy would be to allow a craven desire for peace at any price to interfere with the duty we owe our country and our descendants.

At the present moment Europe has before it a set of menacing and intricate problems. There is the war between Italy and Turkey, a fruitless and mutually wasting struggle, and yet one with which it would be hazardous to intermeddle. Intimately connected with that matter is the retention of Italy in the Triple Alliance, and scarcely

less important is the point still in doubt as to the gravitation of Turkey with an army which at least knows how to fight as well as any other. But there are still graver issues, and everyone believes that the year will not pass without an acute crisis in the Balkans, and if the problem of the Near East is forced upon us those who are friends and mean to stand together will have to close their ranks and turn their serious attention to business free from sentimentalism. In the present strained state of European relations no one doubts that any aggravation of the long existing tension must occasion a wide explosion in which all the Powers, great and small, would be involved. It may be confidently declared that the relations and obligations between England and France furnish a key to the future. If they are placed on the clear and sure basis of an alliance Germany will abandon all hope of cajoling us into a state of passivity while she deals with France single-handed, and she will at the same time be deprived of the opportunity of spreading disparaging words through her agents in France as to the sincerity and constancy of English friendship. From that point of view also an Anglo-French treaty would be the best contributory to peace.

An Anglo-French treaty would be necessarily defensive in character. It would follow the lines of the Franco-Russian treaty, and of the conventions binding the members of the Triple Alliance. It would be based on the principle that France and England have a common interest in the maintenance of each other's integrity as great Powers in Europe, and that they pledge themselves to join their forces on land and sea whenever either of them is attacked. It cannot be seriously questioned that this is precisely what they would be compelled to do by the instincts of self-preservation whenever Germany threw aside her cloak and claimed the hegemony of Western Europe. But without an alliance, without the frank and well-considered military and naval pre-arrangements which are only possible between allies, that co-operation will be halting, and produce but poor results. If Germany has the intentions which she scarcely affects to conceal—only the other day in discussing the project of an Anglo-German alliance an

important German paper proclaimed its chief merit in the phrase, "Then Germany could dictate to Europe"—the alliance provides the only path of safety. If she has no such intentions, then there is nothing in a purely defensive alliance to give her umbrage.

But there is another duty upon us, and that is to deal straight with the nation to whom a community of interest and peril binds us. Friendship is not a tie to play fast and loose with. It is weakened by vacillation and instability of conduct. Without an alliance, which means a clear and definite undertaking that both sides can understand and which would not be deviated from, the door is left open to admit doubt, misconception, and in the end alienation. The French are a loyal people, and have a right to receive loyalty in return. By temperament they are higher strung than we are, and consequently more susceptible to the influences of doubt and misgiving. They have a right to know exactly how they stand with us, and how we stand towards them. The *entente cordiale* has been a very good introductory stage; the time has come to convert it into a more definite agreement, and the country that concluded an alliance with Japan for the Far East can scarcely plead so strong a repugnance for alliances of any kind that it will not make one with France in the West.

Let us enlarge our horizon for a few concluding remarks. There is another Power to be brought, at some future date, within the fold of those States which do not wish "to dictate" to anyone, which do not vaunt of "their shining armour," and which are really only desirous of preserving all they deem valuable and dear. This is the United States of America. We cannot doubt that both for France and England Americans have a very special regard, we cannot doubt that they have rejoiced at seeing the old rivals laying aside the rancour of centuries and joining in friendship and mutual support. The closer that bond is drawn the more gratifying will be the sight to the American nation which knows as well as we do that neither France nor England will ever challenge the Monroe doctrine. The moment has not yet come for the United States to conclude alliances. They have an enviable security which we cannot claim, but the time is sure to come when the American

people will feel that their security and their power are not to be devoted to purely selfish ends, and that they have a duty to perform for the progress of the world in helping those who wish to uphold free communities, and to repel the aggressions of a military dictatorship which aims at their overthrow. We are not so optimistic as to believe that America would join an Anglo-French alliance within any period that could now be safely fixed, but we are confident that it would have her sympathy and moral support. The day is also certain to arrive when, confronted with the new problems raised by the opening of the Panama Canal, the United States Government will find itself compelled to give as much consideration to external questions as we of the Old World have long had to do, and then it will not be ungratifying to it to discover that in adjusting them America may regard France and England as one, and assume that she has friends in both.

THE NEW SPIRIT IN BELGIUM*

THE European crisis of last summer has roused a new spirit in Belgium, and stirred the sentiment of patriotism in the heart of every Belgian citizen. It was a crisis in which our interests and feelings were also concerned, but at least we were not conscious of the profound despair due to helplessness and military weakness that fell upon the Belgian people last September. For days, for weeks even, the inhabitants of the provinces south of the Meuse lived in constant dread that the morrow would see the German host traversing their territory, without their Government being able to lift a finger for their protection. There were some Belgian authorities at the time who reposed faith in the alleged impregnability of the Liège forts, but the revelations subsequently made as to their unpreparedness, the inadequacy of the garrison, the deficiency of the munitions, and the limitations of the forts themselves, have shown that there was no basis for this faith, and that they would have succumbed to a prompt and vigorous attack.

The emotion roused in Belgium by the appreciation of the true position last September has been intensified by the discovery that the country was not merely not ready to defend its neutrality, but that the unreadiness was largely due to the improvidence of the Government. Admissions have been made in the Belgian Chamber of a startling character as to the deficiencies in the stores of ammunition at Antwerp, and it would not be difficult to show that the condition of things at Liège—the frontier fortress exposed to immediate attack on invasion—was far worse. In face of the opinions expressed by several leading politicians and generals in Belgium, which I shall quote from further on, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that if war had

* *Fortnightly Review*, June, 1912.

then taken place Belgium would have cut a miserable figure, humiliating to herself and distressing to her well-wishers. Under any circumstances it is not the part of a genuine friend to hide the truth, when essential to speak, under the guise of flattery, but in the present instance there is the less need to do so because the Belgians themselves are alive to it. They are so much alive to it that they are seeking in every way to provide the remedy for past and present shortcomings, and thus to get ready in good time to show a better front to the invader when he next assembles his forces along their frontier.

The points that suggest themselves for our consideration are in the first place the evidence that Belgian opinion is aroused on the subject of the preservation of the neutrality of their country and the maintenance of its integrity and independence which are wrapped up in that principle. Better evidence could not be desired than the last debate in the Chamber, followed up as it was by an inquiry as to "Whether Belgium can defend her neutrality?" instituted by *Le Journal*, of Paris, to which Messieurs Paul Hymans, Vandervelde, and Monville contributed. Having furnished that evidence we will proceed to consider Belgium's military position by the light of her existing army and natural or artificial means of defence. Finally, we will discuss Belgium's chances of realising the programme sketched by the above-named leaders of the Opposition, who are confident that they will be the responsible Government after the General Election which will take place within a few days, and then we will offer some observations on the need of our supplementing Belgium's national efforts to repel a danger which we confess seems to us far more formidable than it does even to Belgian alarmists.

There is one preliminary point to be established before quoting the opinions to which reference has been made. The men who express them are not merely the leaders of what is now called the United Liberal party, but they are the exponents of the doubts and fears that are passing through the minds of the French-speaking half of the Belgian nation. The existing Government is only suspected of an unpatriotic or philosophical leaning towards Ger-

many as the reputedly stronger neighbour, but it has been convicted of an attempt to exalt the Flemish language at the expense of French which has produced an agitation of indignant protest throughout Walloon Belgium. The intensity of the attack by the Liberal leaders on the Catholic Government which they oppose must be attributed, to some extent at least, to the stormy passions aroused by the Flemish propaganda; but with every allowance made for the bitterness of party strife, the impression left by the inquiry of the *Journal* is that Belgium was not ready to do her part last year during the critical period.

First among the contributors to the Paris paper may be placed M. Paul Hymans, the leader of the Liberal Opposition, and the Premier-designate of the future. He expresses himself with an obvious sense of responsibility:—

“The recent debate on the neutrality and security of Belgium in the Chamber originated in the alarm of last summer. The question which we brought before Parliament was whether Belgium, at the critical moment, was in a position to defend herself. That debate took place in public. You know that we contended that at that moment we were not ready, and I consider that this was proved in the course of the debate.

“The approach of danger provoked an intense revival of national feeling. In a country which has now enjoyed uninterrupted peace for three-quarters of a century, patriotic vigilance tends to become relaxed. But the impression of an imminent danger stirred the country to its core. At no time have the Belgians taken deeper interest in the European situation than they do to-day. The Belgians are not, in the sense given elsewhere to the term, ‘a military people.’ But they wish to live their own life, and intend resolutely to remain independent. They will defend themselves.

“I think myself that, while awaiting a fundamental reorganisation of our military institutions, our present resources and means of defence suffice for the maintenance of our independence, and for the fulfilment of our duties to ourselves as well as to the Powers.

“Belgium is neutral, and she is so by the will of the Powers. It is her duty to compel respect for her neutrality, and she will not fail in it. She has also the right to ask the Powers who guaranteed her neutrality not only to respect it, but to assist her in causing it to be respected. I refuse to believe that this right and these treaties have ceased to count in the eyes of the great nations of Europe.”

The second opinion is that of M. Monville, one of the ablest debaters in the Brussels Chamber and a lawyer of established reputation. M. Monville speaks with even more emphasis than his colleague on the lapses of the Government, and he shows that he has a very clear idea of the

true significance of the guarantee of Belgian neutrality by the signatory Powers. He said :—

“ The question of national defence, which was recently the subject of debate in the Chamber, has caused great emotion in the country. It has aroused the national sentiment. Undoubtedly Belgians are inclined to peace, but they also wish to preserve their independence. I have received many hundreds of letters—some written by persons scarcely able to pen their names—all agreeing in the sentiment, ‘ We are, and wish to remain, Belgians.’ Believe me, when the Belgian people has to fight for its existence it will not count money, men, or any sacrifice whatever, nor will heroism be wanting. Citizens and workmen alike will only think of defending their country. What Belgium has to do is to defend her neutrality. The guarantee given by the Powers to that neutrality does not reduce us to a state of impotence. On the contrary, it obliges us to be vigilant and active, for it implies that we are to make ourselves respected. Allow me to say, as a lawyer, that the guarantee is essentially subsidiary. It is a support of the effort made by the principal party concerned in self-defence. Neither the improvident nor the pusillanimous will be defended by anyone; they will simply be placed under somebody else’s tutelage. We have known in our history what it was to be under the tutelage of foreigners, and the painful recollection survives. That remembrance explains the profound grief and resentment with which the nation realises that the country was not prepared to defend its integrity during the critical months of July, August, and September last year.”

But of all the opinions recorded the most interesting is that of M. Vandervelde, the leader of the Socialist party, which is ostensibly opposed to wars of all kinds. His opinion should be almost as much of an eye-opener for the Socialists of this country as Herr Bebel’s declaration last year that if there were war the German Socialists would fight for their country just like other Germans. M. Vandervelde, speaking for the Belgian Socialists, adopts the same strain, and declares on their behalf that they “ will fight like the others.” The sense of imminent peril must be very great, however, to induce him to use language so strongly at variance with his ordinary practice :—

“ What would the Belgian Socialists do in the event of war? The answer is simple. When Belgium is attacked we will defend her. We will fight like the others, and perhaps even more ardently, in the first place to shield our families from the horrors of invasion, and in the next place because, if any Government in Europe committed the crime of letting loose the dogs of war, we Socialists would have a vital interest in doing what we could to ensure its defeat.

“ As a matter of fact, that defeat—remember the consequences of Sedan—would facilitate the revolution which would be sure to break

out on the first reverse within the territory of the aggressor. We do not wish any Power to assume a right to turn our soil into a battlefield. Against such a despoiler, whoever it may be, we intend to employ resolutely all our strength.

"Let us clearly understand what we are talking about. I do not think that war is inevitable, like a natural phenomenon such as the equinoctial gales, or an eclipse of the moon. But still, for some months past the peril has been real. We have been within an ace of a catastrophe, and a similar situation may again arise. The politicians of Belgium may reasonably differ among themselves as to the means to be employed, but they must agree in declaring from the national, as well as the international standpoint, that we will do everything humanly possible to prevent the catastrophe.

"If the Socialists were in power the problem would confront them as it does the Catholics and Liberals. We should organise our defences, and make ready to fight for the express purpose of not being compelled to fight. We should regard the War budget, which I would like to call the budget of national defence, as a premium for the maintenance of peace. For it is clear that the more we are in a position to make his criminal attack costly to the aggressor the more will he hesitate to perpetrate it. . . .

"There is one point I must make clear. The Socialists will never consent to an increase of the military contingent unless it carries with it a proportional reduction in the period of service by way of compensation."

These opinions, seeing whose they are, can leave no doubt in anyone's mind that Belgians are unanimous in the desire to uphold the independence of their country and to fulfil their duties upon the guarantee which established its neutrality. Their intentions, then, are good and clear; let us see what are the means available to carry them into effect, and this is the more necessary because the Belgian ideal is to keep all combatants off her soil and to prevent Belgium becoming once more the battleground of the nations.

The subject of army reform is not new in Belgium. It may be said to have been more or less under discussion ever since the Franco-German War of forty-two years ago, but until the year 1909 nothing had been done to improve matters. At the end of that year a new military law was passed in the teeth of much opposition abolishing the privilege of pre-emption, that is to say, the right of paying for a substitute, which was the root cause of the failure of the French army in 1870. But even this reform had to be purchased at a price, and a fresh concession was made to anti-military prejudices by a decree that "only one son

would be required from each family." There were also some special exemptions from the application of the new law of military conscription. Only two years have passed, and it is already admitted that the results do not answer expectations, and that the existing Belgian army is unequal to its task. The "fine little army" that was to have arisen Phœnix-like from the ashes of the old is no more than the *armée boiteuse* of the Belgian artillery officer who has recently written some remarkable things on the subject in the Brussels *Soir*. There has, indeed, been a marked social reform. The private may, like his French comrade, appear in his uniform in the salon or the restaurant without attracting attention, but a Belgian army fit to undergo a rude ordeal in the field has still to be created.

Even in numbers the result has proved disappointing. The new law was expected to produce on mobilisation "a total of 188,000 men, all young." The most sanguine estimate now is that the total might reach 170,000 men, but only by including all classes up to the age of thirty-five. With the present peace strength of 43,000 men, infantry battalions muster no more than 400 or 450 men apiece, and the two regiments (five battalions) at Liège, with one battalion at Verviers, do not total over 2,000 men for the garrisoning of twelve forts. In face of these facts the confidence reposed by some of her politicians in Belgium's capacity to defend herself seems to rest on an insecure foundation.

I have cited the opinions of the politicians in Belgium; let me give now the opinion of a Belgian General. Lieutenant-General Ducarne (Lieutenant-General, be it observed, is the highest grade in the Belgian army, the King being the only General) is well known among his fellow-countrymen as one of the ablest and most energetic military officers they possess. Allow me, as one who has seen them at their work for many years past, to pay a respectful tribute to the devotion, single-mindedness, and true patriotism of the corps of Belgian officers. They alone have kept the lamp of devotion to their country burning under every discouragement, despite the criminal indifference of politicians, and even in the despairing moments when they, above all men, knew that behind them they had

no real army at all. If Belgium is saved in the end she will owe her safety primarily to Chazal and Brialmont, and their successors who have not swerved from the path they pointed out. General Ducarne is one of them. Let us note carefully what he says:—

“The invader of our soil, whether coming from the East or the South, will seek to turn the flank of his opponent by passing through Belgium. In all probability this passage will take place across Condroz, the Ardenne, and Southern Luxembourg, but quite possibly the enemy will also dispatch more or less considerable bodies of troops either towards Dutch Limburg or towards Maubeuge. These will be *second line troops*. The idea of this latter movement would be to secure the right flank of the army operating south of the Meuse, and to threaten our communications with Antwerp.

“Under these circumstances, what would be Belgium’s duty?

“According to some the remedy should be found in stationing the whole of our field army in the centre of the country. I will not dwell on this proposal, which I consider an infraction of our duty to Europe, and also an affront to the dignity of the Belgian name and the honour of our army. Belgium would be the laughing-stock of the world and of history if, in face of invasion, its army were to stand with arms at ease. To those who hold such a view I reply: ‘It is not with arms at ease, but with levelled arms that it must receive the enemy.’ In the event of a fresh conflict breaking out our territory would not be respected, provided it were considered that we could not on our resources make it respected. In that sentence Belgium’s true policy stands revealed. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. It certainly could not be found, as was lately suggested, in such a false conception as that Belgium, herself violating her own neutrality, should deliberately make common cause with the belligerent which she thought the stronger, and thus, as it were, make herself safe. Safety will never be found except in our own efforts, in our own attitude.

“In view of the present European situation it is high time that we should take full stock of it, and that we should loyally carry out what we must do to secure the future of our country.”

These considerations have led even the authors of the last Army Bill to come round to the view that something more is required than that measure to meet the exigencies of the times, but their proposals fall very far short of the conversion of Belgium into the “armed nation” which will alone ensure her salvation. They propose, in the first place, an increase of the peace establishment by the creation of two new infantry regiments, to be numbered the 15th and 16th. This would mean an addition of six battalions, or 2,700 men, to the permanent strength of the infantry without mobilisation. If the two regiments were quartered at Liège, where barracks would have to be

constructed, the step would be doubly stimulating and suggestive.

For the information of the general reader it may be mentioned that the infantry of the Belgian army is composed of one regiment of Grenadiers, one regiment of Carabiniers, three regiments of Foot Chasseurs, and fourteen regiments of the line known by their numbers. All these regiments, excepting the Carabiniers, have three active and two reserve battalions each. The Carabiniers have four active and three reserve battalions. There are consequently nineteen foot regiments, with fifty-eight active battalions, and thirty-nine reserve battalions. The Grenadiers and Carabiniers are quartered in Brussels, the 12th and 14th line regiments are at Liège, and the 10th regiment at Arlon. A garrison at Arlon is no longer needed or even justifiable. It may be noted that the recent withdrawal of one battalion of the 10th to Namur is evidence in its way of the appreciation of this fact in Belgium.

But the mere addition of 2,700 infantry on a peace footing, or 8,000 on a war footing, is recognised as only a stop-gap, more useful as an expansion of the existing machinery for rapid and productive mobilisation than as an increase of numbers. Something more is admitted to be necessary, and the latest proposal is to drop the privilege of limiting the levy to one son per family, and to substitute for it what is to be known as "general obligatory service." By this system it is represented that an army of 300,000 men, all young, can be created by the year 1917. To accomplish this result the annual contingent would have to be raised to 40,000 men, and no time is to be wasted if the result is to be attained by the date named.

But the Socialists have declared—M. Vandervelde repeated the ultimatum in his speech—that they will allow of no increase of the contingent without a proportionate decrease in the period of service. The present period of training for infantry is fifteen months with the colours. I believe M. Vandervelde's idea is that it should be reduced to nine months, and that then he would not mind seeing the whole nation pass through the ranks. His views are embodied in the phrase that "the armed nation represents the transition stage to that of general disarma-

ment." For the moment his conception of the most suitable army reorganisation for his country is the adoption of the Swiss system, and there is no doubt that this would be the one least likely to clash with the home life and civic traditions of the Flemish and Walloon provinces. A citizen army without the barrack would appeal very strongly to Belgian opinion, and it is probably the only system under which the country could produce half a million willing soldiers.

The proposal, however, does not commend itself to military authorities of the old school, and the Belgian Premier, giving expression to their views, declared that "this national militia with its four or five hundred thousand men, would be a crowd predestined to slaughter." But M. Vandervelde was not to be thus silenced, and he aptly quoted in rejoinder the opinion of the Belgian artillery officer I have already referred to who had written:—

"Although I do not hold that the Swiss army should be our model, I would a thousand times rather have an army of four or five corps organised on the Swiss system than our present limping army."

It is still doubtful what course will be taken, and whether the advocates of "general obligatory service," or those of a national militia on the Swiss model, will prevail. But it is now safe to assume that no drastic change, such as the latter step would imply, will be attempted on the eve of a General Election which will decide the fate of the existing Government. Excepting, then, for the possible increase of the infantry force by two new regiments, the Belgian army must be considered for the coming summer to have no greater numerical strength than it possessed last. This, we are told on the best authority, will produce 170,000 men on mobilisation of all classes, and will be composed of men up to the age of thirty-five. It may be assumed that the ammunition and munitions of war will on the next occasion be forthcoming in adequate quantities, and that it will not be possible for a critic in the Chamber to say of 1912, as he said of 1911, that the rounds of ammunition for the infantry at Antwerp were only one-twelfth of their proper number. But apart from this improvement, and with the admission that Belgium is now

alive to a peril her public men and officials long pretended to deride, the Belgian army during the coming half-year will be in no better case to resist invasion than it was last year.

But it may be said, and it certainly will be said in Belgium, where the public memory is very sensitive about the millions expended upon them, that we are leaving out of account her "impregnable" fortresses. We are doing nothing of the kind, and it is only because Belgium has created a few fortified positions that we think she has any chance at all of defending herself. But these positions, owing to their extended circumferences, and, it must be added, their inherent natural weaknesses, require in the cases of Liège and Namur, not an ordinary garrison, but an army for their defence. The modest garrisons provided for in the official plans would be incapable of holding the positions named for any length of time. If adequate forces are placed there and in Antwerp, then the whole Belgian army as it exists would be employed, and no field force would be left. The question of time is the vital point. At Antwerp there would probably be a sufficient interval between invasion and the moment of peril for all defects to be made good. At Namur even a few days' respite might be counted on, but at Liège the alarm and the blow will be almost simultaneous. It is Belgium's first duty to be always on guard at that point. If she can hold the eastern forts of that position for ten days she will have done her duty to herself and her friends. In 1911 she would not have held them for ten hours.

Let us dwell for a moment on one or two matters closely connected with the security of Belgium. In the first place, it is a country totally destitute of natural defences. The forests of the Ardenne, regarded in ancient times as the sure shelter of Belgic independence, are now cultivated fields, and traversed in all directions by the best roads to be found in the country. The Meuse, which engirdles the more populous provinces, is crossed by many bridges, and is bridgable at most points. In the province of Luxemburg, and in the southern parts of the provinces of Namur and Liège there is not a single garrison except the detached, isolated, and useless regiment at Arlon. These are elements

of weakness which no project of army reorganisation ever proposed in Belgium would have removed. They can only be removed by that comprehensive national levy on the Swiss or another system which would produce a minimum trained force of half a million men. Without men in sufficient numbers—a mere handful is useless—the cupola forts of Fléron, Chaudfontaine, and Embourg are valueless; and the following wise words of a Belgian officer ought to be taken to heart by his countrymen: "Let us only remember that fortresses are not everything; a nation trusting to them is on the high road to decay."

We have now to consider Belgium's chances of realising the results anticipated by the three Liberal leaders; perhaps M. Monville should be excluded, as he does not commit himself to any optimistic opinion. Both M. Hymans and M. Vandervelde seem to hold the view that even with the existing means of defence, properly utilised, Belgium could defend the integrity of her territory. It will make the position of the present writer perfectly clear if he, who first called prominent attention to the defence of Belgium in these pages nearly twelve years ago, states that he does not share this opinion, and that he believes the utmost Belgium could do on her own unaided resources, and that only on the assumption that she places 50,000 men in the place to hold "the intervals," is to defend the Liège position for a fortnight. We are talking, be it remembered, of the actual state of things, and not of the time when Belgium may have four or five army corps raised on the Swiss or some other system; but the creation of a new army is necessarily a work of time, and events will not wait on the convenience of anyone.

However uncomplimentary it may appear, then, we must not conceal our opinion that Belgium has not the means of realising her ideal programme of making such a good show in face of any new menace of invasion that the aggressor will be afraid to attack her. There is no military authority in either Germany, France, or England who, having studied the matter, holds that view. On the contrary, they are all agreed that for the first campaign Belgian resistance without external co-operation will count for nothing and can be ignored. It would be instructive to have the opinion

of some qualified Belgian soldier like General Ducarne or General Heinsberger who would tell his fellow-countrymen exactly what he thought without flattery or qualification. We imagine his opinion would not be very different. This is obviously not a position in which a nation of seven and a half millions should allow itself to be placed.

Opinions have been quoted to show that many public men in Belgium have a very just appreciation of her peril and her duty. They are agreed that for her own existence' sake she must discharge her duty. But where they are weak, or rather where they allow moral indignation to take the place of reason, is in assuming the means of adequate self-defence to be available when the evident truth is the opposite. It will be idle to pass patriotic resolutions in the Brussels Chamber when the German commander is ordering the Liège citizens to keep quiet in their houses from his camp on the site of what were the forts of Embourg and Chaudfontaine.

What the Belgian authorities have to do is to compare means and ends, and to base sound calculations upon them in anticipation of an easily ascertainable variety of contingencies. Among them are some that would render the prompt request for external aid imperative. Yet it may be feared that Belgians generally are thinking too much of the ideal of keeping all foreigners off their native soil so that it may not again become a general battleground, and too little of the practical remedy which is the admission at the earliest possible moment of her resolute defenders. It is the more curious to find this backwardness for, even in her brief modern history, Belgium had one experience of the evils of procrastination. Her refusal to admit the French army in July, 1831, entailed the disastrous campaign in August of that year, which threatened her with extinction and blighted some of her fondest hopes. We would ask the Belgian people to face boldly the plain and obvious truth that in the hour of peril they cannot stand alone. They will require the support of others, and in their own interests they should consider how that support could be turned to the best account. Again, we wish to make it clear that we are speaking of Belgium as it exists, and as it will be for the next few years. When it has

become a real "armed nation" external support will be less vital for it, and perhaps this consideration may weigh with the Belgians to favour the adoption of the measure.

General Ducarne very rightly repels with scorn the suggestion that Belgium should attach herself to the neighbour which seemed to her to be the stronger. It would be not only an unworthy but a perilous course, as the Belgian estimate of strength might prove fallacious. Her course should be guided by the sense of her own duty, and by a reasonable conviction as to which group of Powers would most desire to see her independence and autonomy surviving the struggle. As Belgium is "the creation of England and France acting together," to use the words of Louis Philippe, she has no right to suspect that they would wish to undo their own handiwork if she only showed the loyalty that she displayed in 1870 to the Charter of her existence. The new spirit that is abroad in Belgium encourages us to believe that this will be the case. We may doubt the possession of the means, but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the whole Belgian nation is stirred at the present time by a profound sentiment of patriotic ardour, which only needs to be diverted into the proper channels to make it a stubborn and formidable adversary with whom the most powerful aggressor would in the end have seriously to count.

A FURTHER OBJECT-LESSON IN GERMAN PLANS*

IN February, 1910, I was allowed to place before your readers an object-lesson in German plans. I am now presenting them with a further object-lesson based on the development of the scheme sketched in the former article, and showing the systematic way in which Germany is preparing for the next great war in Western Europe.

For anyone who has seen the feats of railway construction by the German Army Railway Department within the last few years in the region stretching west of the Rhine, north of Mayence, towards France, Luxemburg, and Belgium, it is impossible not to pay a tribute of admiration to the thoroughness of German plans, and to the foresight that has guided them. If we contrast them with our own haphazard and halting action in all military, and now even in naval affairs, we see the proofs of the rising Empire and the evidence of the decaying one. We see, on one hand, national strength and wealth concentrated under a single and central authority on the accomplishment of the preliminaries to an immense triumph, which shall place Western Europe in a state of thralldom to Germany; and on the other, national strength and wealth frittered away and wasted by a system of Party Government which is absolutely hostile to all military preparations of any kind whatever. Attention to the smallest detail in readiness for war is the motto at Berlin. Neglect of the Army in great things as well as small is the practice in London. The German War Department pursues its course in silence. Here peace-at-any-price is shouted from the house-tops as a reason for cutting down military and naval expenditure.

* *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1914.

The awakening will come sooner or later, and the longer it is put off the more terrible it will be.

In 1909 the Germans had just doubled the single-railed line from Aix to St. Vith, equipping each station *en route* with numerous sidings for detraining and entraining troops, and they had also commenced their part of the light railway destined to connect the border towns of Malmédy and Stavelot. This railway, at last completed on Belgian as well as German territory, was opened for traffic the other day. This short line, of some five and a half miles in length, has attracted a good deal of attention, but not more than it deserves, for it unites the German and Belgian railway systems at a point where Belgium is quite undefended. But it may be said that this is only a light railway, and therefore it is right to add that its gauge is uniform with that of the main-line systems it connects. It is quite true that the part of the connecting link between Malmédy and Weismes—the junction for Malmédy on the Aix-St. Vith main line—has been left unimproved, and that owing to its bad alignment and poor permanent way, it seemed to detract greatly from the value of the railway of which it formed an essential part. But its evidently intentional neglect ought to have aroused a suspicion that the Germans had some different plan in view, and this has now been revealed. Orders have been issued to construct with all possible speed a new line connecting Malmédy with Weywertz—the station immediately north of Weismes. This line will pass by Chodes, and along a level that will obviate any necessity for a tunnel. In the first place, it is to be used exclusively for military purposes, and more especially to facilitate the quartering of a cavalry regiment in Malmédy. It is indicative of German ways to note that the line is to be finished within twelve months.

The entirely innocent and unimportant Stavelot-Malmédy line, which we were assured in the first place was built out of regard for local requirements, is thus proved on the morrow of its completion to be a link of great importance in the railway chain between the Rhine and the interior of Belgium. Its full significance, however, will only be appreciated by those who take the following

fresh facts into consideration and realise from them that the Malmédy line, far from being a separate and isolated enterprise, is an essential part of a general scheme, which embraces the whole of the Eifel region.

Weywertz has just been mentioned. In 1909 the extensive clearings then being made at this point for platforms and sidings were spoken of as those of Butgenbach, and no one among even the well-informed had the smallest conception why this roadside halt had been chosen for such an important and extensive development. It was not until 1912 that the well-kept secret leaked out. Behind this point, which then changed its name to Weywertz Junction, a new double-railed line had been constructed to the station of Junkerath on the main line from Cologne to Treves. The railway itself, constructed without regard to expense, across a region that rarely falls below an altitude of 1,800 feet, is an achievement that would have made the reputation of any civilian engineer or contractor. It has been built without any weak point, from the military point of view, in tunnel or viaduct. At each of the stations along the route extensive sidings have been laid out, not for goods trains, as there is neither population nor commerce, but for the trains that would convey as rapidly as possible and without a hitch the army corps drawn from the interior of Germany destined in the first place to invade Belgium. At Weywertz will converge the trains coming from Aix by the western of the two parallel railways, and from Cologne and Bonn by the eastern of them. This is the fact which makes the Malmédy line of such great importance, and the new connection of that little town with Weywertz by a direct line necessarily enhances it. A comparatively trifling detail in the construction of the Weywertz-Junkerath line shows how thoroughly the Germans had thought out every detail beforehand. Between Stadtkyll and Junkerath a special connection is made with the main line near Dahlem, north of Junkerath, so that trains may proceed without delay on the way from Cologne to Weywertz. This connecting link is concealed as far as possible and reserved for military trains.

The Weywertz-Junkerath line furnishes the real clue to

the importance of the new Malmédy-Stavelot line, and already the German papers are talking of through trains from Junkerath, not merely to Stavelot, but to Trois Ponts, the station south of it on the Belgian line to the Grand Duchy, and the junction for the line serving the Amblève to Rivage on the Ourthe Valley line from Liège to Marloie. The presumably innocent Malmédy-Stavelot line is thus seen to be a vital completing link on a railway which stretches from Cologne *viâ* Euskirchen across the Northern Eifel to Weywertz on the Aix line, and thence to Trois Ponts, the key, strategically speaking, to the Eastern Ardennes. But the incredulous will say: "It is only a light railway." The official authorisation states that trains on the Malmédy-Stavelot line may travel at the rate of forty miles an hour, although for the first three months of working the speed is not to exceed twenty-five miles an hour. In Belgium the maximum speed allowed on a light railway is sixteen miles an hour. The conclusion is obvious. The Malmédy-Stavelot line is not a light railway, but a section of a new main-line system which has just come into existence. Before dealing with the purely military side of this question, let us complete our survey of the new German railways.

The Weywertz-Junkerath line is the striking achievement in the northern part of the Eifel, but it does not stand alone. Just as it is necessary to go behind Weywertz to understand the full importance of the Malmédy extension, so must we go behind Junkerath to find out the full development and significance of German plans. The reader will remember that the new theory of the offensive which is to immediately follow, or even to precede, the declaration of war is that the troops so employed will be launched by train from the interior of the German Empire to the frontier of the State to be invaded. It is therefore clear that the main consideration will be to direct trains from different parts of the country to the objective points. A little consideration will show that the weak bit in the German plan of concentration in the region of which we are especially speaking has been that all the trains must pass through Cologne. The corps for Aix-la-Chapelle itself, for Weywertz, &c., *viâ* Aix, for Weywertz *viâ*

Stadtkyll, all have to pass through Cologne. This defect has already been largely diminished, and will shortly be removed altogether.

Between Bonn and Coblenz two single-railed lines have branched off from the Rhine left-bank main line into the Eifel. One was the line from Remagen to Adenau, and the other that from Andernach to Mayen, Daun, and Pelm. Before the Weywertz-Junkerath line was finished, work on these railways was taken in hand. The Adenau line was doubled as far as Dumpelfeld, and a new line was constructed from that place to Ahrdorf and Hillesheim. At Hillesheim one branch goes north to join the main Cologne-Treves line at Lissendorf, the station immediately south of Junkerath, while the other turns south to join the same line at Pelm. Besides this, a new double-railed line has been laid from Ahrdorf, already mentioned on the Dumpelfeld-Hillesheim line, to Blankenheimerdorf (the third station north of Junkerath). From Remagen, therefore, troops can now be sent by two routes to Junkerath, thus relieving the strain on Cologne. Less is known at present of the actual work accomplished on the Andernach line, but it has been doubled to as far as Mayen. As the remainder of this line to Daun and Gerolstein is exceedingly tortuous, it is probable that Mayen will be linked up by a new railway with Adenau or Ahrdorf. Thus all these secondary lateral communications will be brought westwards so as to converge on that section of the Cologne-Treves line which lies between Blankenheimerdorf on the north and Pelm on the south, with Junkerath as the central point.

Before proceeding to describe the last of the new strategic railways, which is further south, the question of the improved facilities for crossing the Rhine claims attention. Formerly the Rhine was regarded as Germany's chief defence against France, and therefore it was left unbridged as far as possible. From Mayence to Cologne there were only the railway bridge at Horchheim, the bridge of boats at Coblenz, and the bridge at Bonn. The old fear of French invasion is dead; in its place has arisen the intense desire to remove all obstacles to the prompt invasion of France whenever war is declared. The Rhine

itself is, from this point of view, the most formidable of obstacles; therefore, it is to be bridged at numerous points, and at three of them the work is far advanced towards completion. The bridge of boats at Coblenz is to be superseded by a permanent bridge connecting Ehrenbreitstein with that town. Neuwied is to be connected with Weissen-thurm, and this will give direct access from the right bank to the Mayen line. But the most important and considerable of all the new bridges will be that connecting Rudesheim and Bingen. This is being constructed at very great cost, and in the face of immense difficulties, with the special object of giving direct communication between the interior of Germany and the several railways in the Nahe and collateral valleys. This bridge will be one for a double-railed line and for vehicular and foot traffic as well.

The importance of this bridge is that it will give direct communication from the main lines on the right bank (north of Wiesbaden, Mayence, and Frankfort) to the Nahe Valley, which is the main road, as it were, to the chief German points of concentration, on the outbreak of war with France, viz., Saarbrück and Saargemund. To emphasise this point, it may be mentioned that the rails crossing the Rudesheim bridge will not connect with the left bank main line, but will join those leading direct to Kreuznach. Kreuznach is the present junction for two lines leading in a south-westerly direction, one by the Nahe Valley direct to Saarbrück, and the other to Deux Ponts and Saargemund. These systems are in existence. The new strategy points to an improvement of communications with Treves by the left bank of the Moselle or across Hunsrück from Simmern; for Treves, and its dependent camp of Schönfelderhof, are the concentration points against the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, just as Weywertz-Malmédy are against Belgium and Saarbrück-Saargemund against Lorraine.

To complete the picture, a few words must be said about what is contemplated south of St. Vith, the present terminus of the double-railed portion of the line from Aix. St. Vith, in the strict sense of the term, is not a terminus. It is, in the first place, the ending of the double-railed line

from Aix by Weywertz and Weismes; but, in the second place, it is the junction of two single-rail lines of very considerable and growing importance. One is the line to Trois Vierges in the Grand Duchy *viâ* Burg Reuland; the other is the line by Pronsvelt and Prüm to Gerolstein on the Cologne-Treves line. At Pronsvelt there is a branch terminating at Waxweiler. This branch is to be connected shortly with Kyllburg on the Treves line, already mentioned, but the latest German plan is to connect St. Vith with Treves by a direct line flanking the frontier of the Grand Duchy at Vianden and Echternach, just as the northern section flanks that of Belgium from Dolhain and the Baraque de Michel to Gouvy. Extensive alterations at St. Vith already indicate clearly enough what will be the next stage of German railway development. The Grand Duchy, like the Belgian Ardennes, is to be used as a stepping-stone to the French frontier.

No one who takes the trouble to consider the facts that have been set forth by the aid of a large-scale map, will fail to see that the Malmédy-Stavelot line, far from being a trivial matter, is part of a vast and well-devised scheme for attaining great ends. The object-lesson has been given, but lest it be thrown away on those who will not see and are resolved not to hear, an effort must be made to show all it ought to teach, and for that purpose we must remember that north of Liége Germany has made, and is still making, the new lines that will enable her to swoop down on the Meuse bridges at Nijmegen, Mook, Gennep, Venlo, Roermond, Maeseyck, and Maestricht, and thus complete her converging movement across North Brabant and Limburg to Antwerp and Brussels. Thus on an arc extending from Treves to Nijmegen (excluding from our purview what is called the main concentration on the Saar behind Metz) the German War Department has arranged for a simultaneous advance by fourteen separate routes across Holland, Belgium, and the Grand Duchy. The character of that advance may be judged from the boast freely uttered at German mess tables that "if the English are not in Antwerp within five days of the outbreak of hostilities, they will never get there."

But of all these lines of advance the most threatening

for France, and consequently for this country in the end, is that through the Belgian Ardennes by the roads passing through Stavelot, Viel Salm, and Gouvy. Of these the Stavelot entrance, thanks to the new railway, is the most important. If Germany secures Stavelot, Trois Ponts, and the stations south of those places as far as Gouvy within twenty-four hours of the order to advance, as seemingly she counts on doing, she will obtain complete control of the eastern half of the Ardennes, and the Belgian population of that region may be regarded as then and there reduced to the status of a subjected people. Resistance by the civil population would be made a penal offence, to be dealt with by the severest reprisals, and of a military defending force there is not, under the present dispensation, the smallest vestige. Nor is there any likelihood of garrisons being moved to this region within any reasonable time, unless the Belgian Government receives a very vigorous application of Anglo-French pressure. In plain words, the part of Belgium to which Germany has gained access by the Stavelot railway is quite undefended, and apparently there is no chance of any improvement in this respect on her own initiative.

At the very moment of this striking change in the south-eastern quarter of Belgium, steps are being taken by her Government greatly to enlarge the station at Trois Ponts, and to improve the line south of that place to Gouvy. This line, which was originally half Grand Ducal, as jointly held with the Prince Henri Company, is now entirely Belgian, and is being converted into a double-railed track. The Belgian Government is quite within its rights in improving this or any other of its railways, but the fact remains that in this instance the improvement must greatly help Germany in reaching the French frontier between Longwy and Sedan. For this additional reason, the German intrusion into Belgian territory at Stavelot and Trois Ponts must be regarded as full of menace to France, and as imperilling the integrity of Belgium at a point where her only defence lay in the poverty and inadequacy of the means of communication. Now that express trains are promised on a double track from Pepinster and Spa to Gouvy, and that the Germans are already talking of

using the line from Junkerath to Trois Ponts and Gouvy as a relief to the strain on the Welkenraedt-Liège route, it is clear that the existing means of communication have changed from an obstacle to a facility.

But the matter does not end at Gouvy. Gouvy itself is indeed a point of little importance, although we must be prepared to see Germany make an attempt to link it up with St. Vith *via* Beho, just as she has done Malmédy and Stavelot; but Gouvy is the junction for the southern line to Libramont, the key to the central Ardennes. Libramont is on the main line from Brussels to Luxemburg, Metz and Treves. It has branch lines that, practically speaking, run parallel with the whole of Belgium's southern frontier east of the Meuse. We may safely assume that Germany will endeavour to secure by motor-car and cavalry raid the three consecutive junctions on this main line at Marloie, Jemelle and Libramont, while the railways from Trois Ponts and Gouvy will give her the facilities for moving forward with great rapidity large bodies of infantry to the support of the flying detachments.

The preparations for a bold dash forward have thus been brought as nearly as possible to completion in time of peace, and with the co-operation, *nolens volens*, of Belgium. We are looking mainly to the Ardennes frontier, but it does not diminish the significance of what has been effected there to know that the same thing has, more or less, happened also all along the Dutch frontier. Germany has made ready, at heavy outlay, to take the offensive at a moment's notice, and to throw enormous forces across the territories of two unoffending and pacific neighbours in her fixed resolve to break through the northern defences of France and thus to turn the formidable fortifications of the Vosges. She has prepared for the day by bringing fully-equipped and admirably constructed railways up to her neighbours' frontiers, and in some places across them, at Venlo and Stavelot for instance. An immense sum of money has been sunk in these railways—the Weywertz line alone represents two millions sterling—and there is not the least prospect of an adequate return on them as commercial ventures. They are purely military and strategical preparations for war with France.

There is a great reluctance in this country, even among the initiated, to face the situation created by these new railways, and even in Belgium, which is so close to them, there is an optimistic belief that they represent merely the superfluous energy of their neighbours. Like the cat with the bird, Germany seeks to fascinate Belgium before springing on her. But if there is blindness here, and hopeful helplessness in Belgium, French military authorities are fully alive to the change that has taken place in regard to the eastern half of the northern frontier of France, and it is no secret that they regard it with warm resentment. France is so placed in this quarter that she cannot adopt counter precautions of any adequate effect. She sees herself obliged to leave the first move and the first blow in this quarter to Germany, and that advantage might influence the whole character of the first campaign. The only effective reply in the military sense that France could make to the German menace would be to absorb the Ardennes herself, move up her frontier to Stavelot and Gouvy, and construct on the Baraque de Fraiture a fortified position like that at Lille or Verdun. This reply she is debarred from making by political considerations, such as respect for her guarantee of Belgian integrity and her strong desire to spare the susceptibilities of England. But she may reasonably ask that her good faith and her good will should not have to be exhibited at the expense of her own security.

The time has come, then, to call upon the Belgian Government to take immediate and effective measures to counterbalance the advantages that Germany has now accumulated for the overrunning of what we call the Ardennes within forty-eight hours of the first passage of the trains over the railways described in this paper, and France is entitled to ask the British Government to join with her in this vigorous and urgent demand. It is the bounden duty of the Belgian Government to block and bar the new line of advance opened, partly by its own co-operation, for the German armies, and this can only be accomplished by the placing in their path of a fort or forts, which would bring them to a speedy halt, and

deprive the inroad of that character of celerity and irresistibility which is, from the Berlin point of view, its chief attraction.

Whether the situation would be adequately met by a *fort d'arrêt* at Bastogne, as proposed in a previous article of this series, or by the more extensive fortification of Libramont and its approaches, is a matter for the consideration of the competent military authorities. But it is impossible to close one's eyes to the superior claims of a trilateral fortification of the position designated from its central point as the Baraque de Fraiture. Protected on its northern side by the Amblève, it would command that valley; its eastern section would close the routes to La Roche and St. Hubert, while its southern side would render any western advance from Gouvy impossible. In plain words, the Belgians could construct at well-chosen points along these commanding heights lines that would resemble those of Torres Vedras for the defence of their national existence. But unless France and England, acting together, are very insistent at Brussels, nothing will be done. The old silly argument that to take such steps would be to offer provocation to Germany will be used as a reason for doing nothing. If this argument were to be accepted, it could only mean that Germany was to be allowed the monopoly of provocation. Belgium will be asked to take steps, not against anything that Germany may do, but against something she has done. If she is loth to defend herself, she must remember that her neutrality imposes upon her this obligation for the sake of the safety of those who have guaranteed her existence as an independent State. If she should use the argument that her own subjects are indifferent in the matter, she can be answered with absolute assurance that the whole population of the Province of Luxemburg consider that they have been given over, helpless and without a blow in their behalf, to the Eastern invader.

A very serious and anxious situation has arisen from the creation of the new network of German railways. In Paris military opinion is unanimous that they give Germany the means of penetrating into France within forty-eight hours

of the decision to go to war. No matter how successful the counter moves of the French army may prove, they cannot avert this initial and impressive success by the Germans at a point where the French frontier is, and must remain, weakly defended. Belgium alone can remedy the evil.

GERMAN DESIGNS ON THE CONGO*

As the German Government declared, on violating the neutrality of Belgium and invading her territory, that she would, after the war was over, show her consideration for Belgium in the terms of peace, the following paper, prepared long before the present rupture, makes clear what that consideration will amount to. Germany may not wish to have a second Alsace in Belgium, but she does wish and hope to rob Belgium of her vast colony in the Congo.

DURING the Moroccan crisis three years ago, when there was some question of compensating Germany, Sir Edward Grey said, with characteristic clearness, that it should "not be at the expense of the Belgian Congo." At the time the words were uttered there was only a dim suspicion in some quarters that Germany might have designs on the Congo, but there is no longer any concealment in German colonial and naval circles that the acquisition of the whole or a good part of the Belgian territory in Africa constitutes the first step in providing Germany with those ready-made colonies which she so greatly covets. The question has been treated at length in many Pan-German publications, but of far deeper significance is the evidence furnished by the free expression in influential circles of the opinion that the destiny of the Belgian colony is to pass under the Imperial flag, and that German rule is to stretch in a broad belt across Africa from ocean to ocean. The declaration of the British Foreign Secretary and German aspirations and designs are thus brought into clear and seemingly irreconcilable conflict.

While I take leave to doubt whether the true situation is yet fully realised here, even in official circles, there is no uncertainty or qualified opinion in Belgium as to the drift of Germany's policy in Africa. Long before Sir

* *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1914.

Edward Grey's declaration the authorities in Brussels had become alive to the fact that the friendship of Berlin was insincere, and that Germany hoped to compensate herself for disappointments in East Africa by filching the prizes of Belgian effort and enterprise in that vast territory which forms the centre of the Black Continent. From not one, but a hundred Belgians—men of competence to speak with authority—have I received the same tale as to their German friends and business acquaintances giving them assurances in confidence that a victorious Germany in the next European war would not annex Belgium, but would content herself with appropriating the Congo. This dubious comfort does not go far towards relieving Belgian apprehension, for although the Belgians do not yet prize the Congo as the Dutch do Java, they still feel a great pride in their nascent African colony. The Germans have but two ideas in their heads at the present time on the European situation. One is that Germany must triumph over all her opponents in the coming war of the nations, and the other is that little States like Belgium must bow their heads to the inevitable. It never enters their minds that the Belgian people might think that they have a rôle to play in Europe, and that behind Belgian patriotism is the support of England upholding the faith of treaties and the principle enunciated by the Foreign Secretary.

In these circumstances it is well worth devoting a little time and space to the task of tracing the development of German policy with regard to the Congo, so that the springs and drift of the future action of the Berlin Government may be thoroughly understood and appreciated before the events themselves occur. There will then be no excuse for surprise, because in this matter, as generally, Prussian policy is based on a settled plan slowly elaborated, carefully prepared and put into execution *per fas aut nefas*.

German policy in the Congo originated at the time of the unfortunate Anglo-Portuguese Convention of February, 1884. France and Germany refused to recognise it, and Bismarck, fortified by French support, summoned the Conference at Berlin which was to give a new Constitution to Central Africa. At that time Germany was all for "the

international control of the River Congo," and the recognition of "the Belgian enterprises on the Congo as an independent State." Bismarck was King Leopold's supporter for the nonce; from no one did he receive more compliments.

While some diplomatists were shaping the map of Africa at Berlin, others were discovering the basis of a new German colonial empire in London. Through the good-humour and credulity of the British Government, Germany was allowed to hasten and then to share in the first disruption of the Sultanate of Zanzibar, and the acquisition was of the greater importance because at that time nearly everybody held the view that Congolese trade would flow eastwards to the Indian Ocean. The region of the Cataracts seemed to place an insurmountable impediment in the river-highway to the Atlantic. German colonial experts were, therefore, confident that the development of the Congo region would bring a considerable and ever-increasing transport trade across the East African possessions, and this hope had not diminished when German East Africa was completed by the later Anglo-German agreement of 1890. So long as these views prevailed, the German Government bestowed its sympathy and support on the Congo State, and turned a deaf ear to the proposals of the British Government to its detriment. For a short period King Leopold rejoiced in the possession of this German bulwark, but with extraordinary astuteness he realised at an early stage the change that was passing over German policy, and in the last years of his reign it was to Paris rather than Berlin that he turned for counsel and comfort. It was in the French capital that the basis of Anglo-Belgian reconciliation over the Congo controversy was first discovered, and by that time there was no longer any doubt in Paris and Brussels as to what Germany's views about the future of the Congo region really were.

It was in 1894-5 that a first inkling was given as to Germany's ulterior designs, and although the manifestation took three separate and distinct forms, there was this feature in common to them all, that they aimed at limiting the independence and restricting the sphere of influence

of the Congo State. One of two things had taken place at Berlin: it was either realised that King Leopold could not be used as a tool, or it was held that Germany was strong enough to dispense with subterfuges and to enforce her views by her own will. However that may be, it was in May, 1894, that Germany made the first move, and once more, as, ten years earlier, it was directed against England. These incidents pass unnoticed by a public which seems to have lost the capacity of appreciating the significance of current events in world-politics, but they stand out clearly from any historical retrospect of the period. A Pitt, a Canning, or a Palmerston would have known how to deal with Bismarck in 1884, or his successor, Caprivi, in 1894, and well would it have been for our naval superiority if we had had statesmen of their type; but, being guided by mere politicians, we gave way on both occasions and abandoned the ground we had occupied. In 1884 we dropped the Anglo-Portuguese Convention; in 1894 we dropped that with the Congo State, and of the two the latter was the more contemptible act of moral cowardice.

In so far as the Convention of the 12th of May, 1894, related to the lease of the Bahr el Ghazal province to King Leopold, it is unnecessary to devote space to it here, for to the British people the interesting part is what they lost, and not what others might have gained. Leaving aside, then, the contingent benefits to King Leopold and the Belgians, two immense advantages for this country stand out from the text of this Convention.

The third article read:—"The Independent State of the Congo leases to Great Britain, to be administered, when she shall occupy it, under the conditions and for the period hereafter determined, a strip of territory 25 kilometres broad (15½ miles), extending from the most northern post on Lake Tanganyika, which post is comprised in the strip, to as far as the most southern point of Lake Albert Edward."

The fifth article read:—"The Independent State of the Congo authorises the construction across its territories by Great Britain, or by a company duly authorised by the British Government, of a telegraphic line connecting the

English territories of South Africa with the sphere of English influence on the Nile."

What purpose was the strip of territory referred to in Article 3 intended to serve? It was to provide the route for one of the most important sections of the great trunk line between Egypt and South Africa, generally called the Cape to Cairo Railway. The telegraphic line mentioned in Article 5 was to furnish telegraphic communications across the whole of the Congo State from Rhodesia to the Nile without any restriction as to time, direction, or conditions. It was due to German interference that both these advantages were lost, and although nearly twenty years have intervened, they have not yet been recovered.

Before dealing with the railway question, which is one of paramount importance, it will be better for the sake of clearness to describe first the two other indications of the change that occurred in German policy at this period.

Such trade as the Germans in East Africa had succeeded in establishing with the interior consisted of the export of raw spirit—Hamburg gin—and old firearms to the Arab slave-dealers in exchange for ivory. But in 1892-4 the Arab confederacy was broken up by the Belgians under the late Baron Dhanis, and the Germans lost their market. The Congo authorities set their faces firmly against the import of the only two articles in which the German traders dealt, and, as a consequence, there was much discontent in official circles, for the German Emperor's assurance that he is "the protector of the German trader" dates farther back than yesterday. But a complaint could not be made on the ground that the sale of articles "prohibited" by the Acts of Berlin and Brussels had been stopped. The German Government was compelled to take another line. It represented that an imaginary "premium of ten per cent. paid by the Congo State to its agents for the ivory they bought was of a nature to prejudice the commerce of the German Protectorate." No such premium existed, but it was the fact that Germany could no longer procure ivory, chiefly because the articles she had been accustomed to exchange for it were prohibited and refused admission. Moreover, the market that had existed for those articles in the Arab camps of Kassongo and Kabambare had dis-

appeared, and the Germans had no other exports ready to take their places. But the prospect was still more serious from the German point of view, for the tendency of all the traffic to follow a western course soon became marked and raised gloomy thoughts in the minds of those who had been persuaded of the contrary. It was easy enough for a powerful Government to allege that the cause of the decline of German trade was the policy of the Congo State, but the natural explanation was too obvious to impose on anyone. It was a typical instance of trade following the best route to the markets of the world.

We now come to the third phase of German policy as directed against the Congo State. The considerations first mentioned determined the German authorities to send exploring parties into the border districts of the Congo State, where it was known that Belgian authority was very slight, and a more favourable moment could not have been found, because the Arab campaign had been followed by the Batetela Mutiny, which for a time destroyed it altogether. They were to acquire exact geographical knowledge of an unmapped region, information as to its resources and the openings for trade, and finally to report whether the Belgian occupation was "effective" or not.

Of the three points the last was the most important, for one of the cardinal features in German African policy is that territory which is not "effectively occupied" by the titular owner becomes derelict and may be appropriated. At the moment of which I am speaking the frontier between the Congo and the German Protectorate had not been delimited. It remained as drawn on the map at Berlin, being there defined as "formed by the 30° parallel from the first degree of south latitude to the 1° 20' degree of south latitude, and also by an imaginary straight line drawn from the point of intersection of the 30° degree of east longitude with the parallel of 1° 20' of south latitude to as far as the northern extremity of Lake Tanganyika." This land boundary was completed, it may be observed, by the median line in Lake Tanganyika itself. The main object before the explorers was to show that in the vicinity of that boundary line Belgian authority was non-existent.

Of these explorers the most important and the most successful was Count von Götzen. He did not find any evidence of Belgian occupation until he got well within the borders, but the sensational incident of his journey was the discovery of Lake Kivu, situated half-way between lakes Albert Edward and Tanganyika, and in close proximity to "the imaginary straight line" defining the frontier. The explorer pronounced "the neighbourhood of Kivu to be extremely fertile and rich in provisions of every kind," and he also declared that it would be necessary to explore it more thoroughly whenever the delimitation of the common frontier should be taken in hand. At the same time, his fixing of the lake's geographical position showed beyond doubt that the whole of the lake lay west of "the imaginary straight line," and consequently within the limits of the Congo State. King Leopold took steps to make sure of the prize by promptly sending an expedition to found two Congolese stations on the eastern shore of the lake.

The German Government replied to this move by alleging that Congolese subjects—to wit, the Batetela mutineers—had violated German territory and committed various excesses thereon. But when it realised that the King of the Belgians had collected a force on the lake stronger than any it could bring against it, it abandoned provocative action on the spot, and took up the line that the time had arrived for delimiting the frontier in an exact manner. The German Government contended, and with justice, that this had always been foreseen, and that a boundary drawn on the map was only a temporary expedient. Moreover, the discovery of a new lake, and also of the navigability of the Ruzizi stream—connecting it with Tanganyika—which had formerly been considered unnavigable, had introduced new factors into the question. Although the late King Leopold was a fervent believer in the principle of *beati possidentes*, he could not withhold his consent from the appointment of a joint delimitation commission, more especially as one had been arranged with Great Britain in the same region.

The matter extended over many years, and resulted in a Convention, dated the 11th of August, 1910, which defined the frontier between the Congo, now transformed into a

Belgian colony, and the German Protectorate in East Africa as follows:—

The median line of Tanganyika was abandoned so far as the delta of the Ruzizi is concerned, and in its place is substituted "the thalweg of its principal western branch." From the northern point of the delta "the thalweg of the principal branch of the River Ruzizi" will form the boundary to the point where it flows into Lake Kivu.

The frontier in Lake Kivu follows a line leaving the isles called Iwinza, Nyama Ronga, Kwidjwi, and Kitanga to Belgium, and the isles Kikaya, Gombo, Kumenie, and Wau to Germany, and reaching the northern shore of the lake between Goma (Belgium) and Kissegnies (Germany).

North of Lake Kivu the frontier is traced in a more or less straight line to the Sabinio peak, which is the meeting-point of the three territories belonging to Great Britain, Belgium, and Germany respectively. The practical meaning of this delimitation is that Germany acquires possession of the greater part of the southern coast and the whole of the eastern coast of Lake Kivu, and that north of it her frontier is advanced considerably to the west of the old line.

But notwithstanding a far from inconsiderable local expansion, there is nothing in this acquisition to bring lasting contentment to the Germans, or to alter the causes of their present discontent. Kivu is never likely to play any important part in the internal navigation of Central Africa. Although not so great as was once thought, the obstacles to using the Ruzizi as a means of communication are still considerable. Even if the lake and the river were available for use, they would still be of value only as part of a water route extending northwards from Tanganyika, and that is the exact contrary of what the Germans are seeking. It is no consolation to them to be told, while they are straining every effort to bring trade down to the Indian Ocean, that a shortening of route has been effected which must benefit trade with the Nile and the Congo. It is rather an aggravation of the original injury, and leaves, at all events, the fundamental principles behind German discontent unchanged.

If the Central African situation, then, is to be correctly

judged, it is necessary to remember that Germany is a thoroughly discontented participant and spectator. She finds no satisfaction in what she has acquired. With time and the expenditure of money, East Africa might become of value. But Germany is impatient. She wants quick results. Already she is experiencing difficulty in maintaining her civil and military staffs, and to remedy part of this evil she is meditating the formation of a foreign legion composed of the waifs and strays of Europe. Her main idea is that others have what she covets. In Africa the Belgian Congo is for her a Naboth's Vineyard.

And now let us turn to the railway question, which is the vital matter for the time being in Central Africa. By vetoing our Convention in 1894, Germany deprived us of the route for the Cape to Cairo Railway, and also of our telegraph line; but for some inscrutable reason our displeasure fell at the time not on the real culprit, Germany, but on King Leopold. The next stage in the question was reached when Mr. Cecil Rhodes came to Brussels in the autumn of 1898 to press the claims of the Cape to Cairo Railway on the attention of King Leopold. I was living in Belgium at the time and fully conversant with everything that happened. In the first place, Mr. Rhodes was in a great hurry, and that was not the best condition for approaching the discussion of a very important matter. His friends had also announced that if he failed in Brussels he would succeed in Berlin, to which he was going after leaving the Belgian capital. In the second place, he was so impregnated with the paramount importance of his great railway scheme that he overlooked the fact that the King of the Belgians had also given some study to the question of communications in the interior of Africa, and certainly he was not the man to lay aside his own views at the dictation of even the Colossus of the Cape.

Mr. Rhodes was then too urgent and too imperative to have much chance of immediate success in his errand. It was a question which King Leopold declared could not be settled in a hurry, and besides he inclined to the view that it would have to be treated in sections and not as a single complete scheme. Beyond a personal declaration that he was entirely in favour of fresh railways in the Congo terri-

tory as well as in Africa generally, King Leopold did not see his way to commit himself at that juncture. Mr. Rhodes wanted something much more ample and compromising, although his suggestions lacked precision and even practicability at that moment.

From Brussels Mr. Rhodes went to Berlin, and there the world was informed that his mission had proved completely successful, and that an Anglo-German agreement had been arrived at for the passage of the Cape to Cairo Railway through German territory. I have in my possession a letter written to me at the time by a leading English statesman, in which this passage occurs:—"King Leopold must be very sorry *now* that he did not come to terms with Mr. Rhodes." As a matter of fact, King Leopold was not at all disturbed. He had taken a far more accurate view of the situation than Mr. Rhodes. He did not believe in the durability of any Anglo-German agreement. Where is Mr. Rhodes's German Convention now? His admirers would like to consign it to the limbo of forgotten things.

Shortly after Mr. Rhodes's visit King Leopold discussed the whole question of African railways with me. He professed great admiration for Mr. Rhodes as a typical Empire-builder—King Leopold, despite all the personal attacks made upon him in our Press, was a fervent admirer of the English—and with regard to his great railway scheme expressed his conviction that it was sure to be realised eventually, but it seemed to him hazardous in the existing very imperfect state of our geographical knowledge of Central Africa to attempt to lay down at that moment the precise route that it should follow. With regard to the alleged agreement in the German capital, which was the topic of the day, he spoke with emphasis: "The physical difficulties east of Tanganyika and Kivu are insuperable, and no trunk line from north to south will ever, humanly speaking, pass that way."

"My part," he added, "is of a more practical and modest character. Take the map of the Congo and you will see that there are stretches of the Upper River which are impracticable through the presence of cataracts, and then a little further on the stream again becomes navigable. I propose to build railways to replace those gaps or

breaches in water communication. Believe me, for a long time the main communications must be jointly by rail and by water. I have no doubt that the first English railway will terminate on the southern shore of Tanganyika."

With regard to the supposition that Mr. Rhodes had found consolation in Berlin for what was called his rebuff in Brussels, the King indulged in a little ironical speculation. "You English are a most extraordinary people. What is the most recent incident in Africa? Why, Germany's repudiation of my Convention with Great Britain, and its cancelling by your tame withdrawal. No, I am wrong, there is another more recent still—the Emperor William's telegram to President Kruger; and yet the English papers are saying that *I* am England's enemy, and that the Germans are going to play her game! It is quite inexplicable; but, in anything you write, say that the Cape to Cairo line can *only* be constructed through Congolese territory, and events will prove you right. As for England and Germany, they are irreconcilable rivals, and very possibly they will fight over the body of the Congo State."

The several railways grouped together under the head of the Great Lakes system prove that the late King of the Belgians carried out his plan, but the rapid progress of the railway across Rhodesia and the extraordinary development of Katanga make it probable that the junction of the two railway systems of Britain and Belgium will take place nearer the Lualaba, or Upper Congo, than to Tanganyika. At all events, it is no longer doubtful that the great trunk line from north to south will pass through the Congo and not through German East Africa.

The arrangement of this question will not be brought about by a formal convention between the two Governments as in 1894. Each State will approach the consideration of its part of the great joint undertaking as a matter of internal policy with which no outsider has any right to interfere. But as the resources of Belgium alone would not suffice to meet the cost of so gigantic an undertaking, it is clear that Anglo-Belgian co-operation is preordained; and the successful working of the Katanga arrangement affords encouraging proof that this can be done with

perfect harmony. With such an accord no foreign interference would be tolerated, and when we remember that "the iron horse" has almost reached the Belgian southern frontier and that the Zambesi has been bridged, the date of its signature cannot be very remote.

The Belgians will welcome it because it must give an immense impetus to the development of their southern and eastern provinces in Africa, and because they are persuaded that much of the new trade thus created will follow a western route down the Congo River to the Atlantic. For that reason they have no objection to the creation of a great trunk line from north to south. It is in complete harmony with their own views and projects. It will bring Katanga and Kilo nearer to Stanley Pool and the ports of the Atlantic. The undertaking will be all the more agreeable to them if it follows a track nearer to the Lualaba than to Tanganyika, and indeed it may even be said that parts of that track are ready for use in the several existing sections of the Great Lakes railway. King Leopold probably saw farther than he even pretended to see when by their construction he said he would contribute his little quota of practical value to the great scheme originally conceived by Mr. Cecil Rhodes.

But this prospect is by no means agreeable to the Germans. A trunk railway from north to south will bring no trade to East Africa and the Indian Ocean. To make it of any prospective use costly branch lines would have to be built to connect with it from German territory, and these would be for only a speculative result. Moreover, that railway, although not British-owned in its Congolese section, would in some sense or other be identified with British enterprise and capital, and thus Germany would see constructed in her path the very undertaking to which she so strongly objected in 1894. It was believed at the time that her objection was due not so much to the construction of the railway itself as to the temporary cession of the strip of territory that was to serve as its track; but events showed that this view was not correct. The Germans then proposed that the line should pass through their protectorate; but their view was that it should be a purely German line and that it should subserve German interests.

That meant a track considerably to the east of Tanganyika. Thus only could there be any chance of diverting the trade of the interior of Africa to the Indian Ocean. In a very little time it became clear that German facilities and co-operation were only to be obtained in so far as it suited the views of their Government and the special needs of their Colony. For the Cape to Cairo railway they cared nothing at all; nay, they regarded it with absolute aversion.

And now they are confronted with the accomplishment of the undertaking in the near future. The natural course of events, and no subtle diplomacy or clever dealing, has brought it within the range of all men's vision. The exact form in which it will be accomplished makes it more objectionable than the original scheme, which would at least have followed a track close to the German frontier, and thus only short branches would have been needed to connect the two systems. The change is not due, as may be thought in Germany, to any settled design to isolate German territory, but to the imperious necessity of studying the paying trade route, and avoiding engineering difficulties. The promoters of the undertaking, British as well as Belgian, will think only of the volume of traffic and the return on their capital; and it so happens that there is nothing very inviting from this point of view in the direction of the German Protectorate.

The facts suffice to explain the prevailing discontent not merely in German East Africa, but at Berlin on the subject of Central Africa. Up to the present their Colony has been a costly disappointment, but the outlook is even worse. The construction of what is called the Cape to Cairo railway will place a formidable barrier in the path of German trade expansion, and will relegate the East African Protectorate to a position of hopeless inferiority for many years. The prospect grates on the nerves of all Pan-Germans, and has given rise to desperate schemes. The whole situation is to be changed, they declare, after the next European war, which is regarded as a certain German triumph, and the starting-point of that new German hegemony which is to place ready-made colonies at their disposal as "the spoil to the victors."

First and foremost in the list of these prospective

acquisitions is the Belgian Congo. It is there because Germany well knows that she intends to traverse Belgium whenever she attacks France. At one time she thought that she could count on the inaction of Belgium while she did so; now she knows that Belgium will defend herself as well as she can. But Germany will be magnanimous in her terms of peace. She does not want to be burdened with any troublesome Walloon or Flemish subjects; she will content herself by appropriating the Congo.

Thus do Germans hope to realise their present dream of an African Empire stretching across the Continent in a broad belt from ocean to ocean, opening to them the ports on the Atlantic and barring for ever to us the route from north to south which has been figuratively named the Cape to Cairo line. There is but one obstacle in their path—the opposition of Great Britain, as foreshadowed in Sir Edward Grey's declaration. But that much more than words will be necessary to make it good must be plain to all who will consider the facts and the course of events during the last twenty years. This warning is written to prevent anyone describing the coming revelation of German designs on the Congo as "a bolt from the blue." They are carefully calculated, deliberately formed, and will be prosecuted with unswerving method. They will only be foiled by vigilance and resolution, and by the cordial co-operation of the British and Belgian Governments.

ANTWERP AND THE SCHELDT*

THE too-easy tolerance displayed three and a half years ago to the latest attempt by the Dutch Government to revive its old claim to the sole sovereignty of the Scheldt by the fortification of Flushing has led to a position of things that will be pronounced intolerable whenever Antwerp finds itself in extreme straits, and perhaps at that moment it will be too late to apply a remedy with the necessary dispatch. Both the British and the Belgian Governments were blameworthy for neglecting to enforce in 1911 the principle which they had vindicated in 1831, 1839, and finally in 1863, establishing in the first place and recognising in the second the fact that the sovereignty of the Scheldt had become a co-partnership between Holland and Belgium, instead of the sole possession of the House of Orange. In 1911 the fortification of Flushing was merely a paper intention; in 1914 it is an accomplished fact, and the hypothetical objections raised against the project are now among the factors of the great military and naval problem that confronts us.

It is unnecessary to narrate over again the story of Holland's policy during two centuries of shutting the Scheldt, or of how reluctantly she ceded at the dictation of the Five Powers to Belgium in 1839 the "common possession," "common control," and "reciprocal freedom" of and on that river. It was told at considerable length in a former article.† But when Holland's pretension to the absolute sovereignty of the Scheldt was revived in 1910 by General den Beer Poortugael, who made himself the mouthpiece of the philo-German party at The Hague, the Belgian Government, taking a narrow view of the question, did not insist on the summoning of a conference

* *Fortnightly Review*, October, 1914.

† See *Ante*, p. 164.

between the guaranteeing Powers of Belgium's independence and neutrality to place the matter beyond all dispute.

There were special reasons to explain the attitude of the Belgian Government in 1910-11. The defences of Antwerp against attack from the lower Scheldt were weak and inadequate, and they still remain so. It was decided to remove this weakness by constructing two new forts below Antwerp, one on each bank of the river, but this plan could not be carried out because it was dependent on the grandiose project for changing the course of the Scheldt. Consequently the forts were not and have not yet been built, but the weakness of Antwerp in the direction of the river and the sea remained none the less glaring and incontestable. The Dutch proposal to fortify Flushing came then at an opportune moment. It promised to provide Antwerp with the defence towards the sea which it lacked. That was one reason why the Belgian Government declined in 1911 to make any protest against the fortification of Flushing, acting on the principle that Holland had an unimpeachable right to take whatever steps it liked on its own soil, and leaving the question of the sovereignty of the Scheldt over for a future occasion.

But there was another reason of a different character for this abstention, and probably it was the one that weighed most at Brussels. The Belgian Government desired above all things to preserve its neutrality whenever war broke out in Western Europe. It not merely desired to stand outside any quarrel, but it was confident that this course would be shown by events to be a perfectly feasible policy, for it had no conception of the magnitude and depth of German perfidy. It had the firmest and most loyal intention to remain true to the principle on which its national existence was based by the decree of the Great Powers, and perhaps none of its neighbours was furnished with more ample or repeated proofs of this intention than Germany. Belgium had always been nervous on the subject of French encroachment, and of recent years her military authorities at least had not been blind to the possibility of German invasion. But German diplomacy had insinuated for some time past that perhaps after all England would be the greatest danger to Belgian neutrality in consequence

of her obligations to France under the Entente Cordiale. It is not necessary to suppose that the Belgian Government believed this, but it had an easy way of showing that it intended its neutrality to be respected by everyone by taking up the question of Antwerp's defence against battle-ships and battle cruisers. When local reasons led to the postponement of the construction of its own forts, the same result seemed ensured by the Dutch fortification of Flushing. Not by her own act, but by that of another, Belgium allowed an obstacle to be created in the path of any squadron or expedition coming up the Scheldt.

Of course, this barrier was only contemplated as having force against an enemy, but unfortunately the decision as to who should be regarded as friend or foe passed out of the hands of Belgium into those of Holland. As long as Britain commands the sea there is no danger to Antwerp from naval attack, but as long as Holland is a neutral in the present war the Dutch Government contends that succour cannot be sent to Antwerp by the Scheldt. It will thus be seen that Holland has successfully revived her claim to the sole sovereignty of the Scheldt of which she was dispossessed in 1831-9.

Professor Ernest Nys, of the Belgian Court of Appeal, anticipated this very position in his treatise, *L'Escaut en temps de Guerre*, published at the end of the year 1910:—

“ Moreover, is it possible to conceive so strange a situation as this? A war occurs in which Holland remains neutral, and at once it acquires absolute authority over the waters of the Scheldt; more than that, it is obliged to forbid the entrance of a war fleet belonging to a belligerent to the Scheldt, and its passage into Belgium when that fleet is coming to her assistance; because, according to General Den Beer Poortugael, the fact that the State coming to assist the other State had previously engaged itself by treaty to guarantee its neutrality is without any importance.

“ Was Holland so completely outside the guarantee the Powers gave to Belgium? No doubt she did not guarantee Belgian neutrality, but when signing the treaty of 19th of April, 1839, she knew what engagements the Five Powers had undertaken. Each of these treaties embodied the Twenty-four Articles. Holland must have supposed that the Powers would fulfil their obligations. Under these circumstances she assented to those Articles. Yet it is now contended that she may, and even that she must, oppose the mission of protection and defence that was anticipated as being necessary in the interests of Europe herself!

“ We must not lose sight of what happened in 1870. Great Britain made treaties declaring that she would uphold the neutrality of Belgium.

... If the need had then arisen would Holland have attempted to prevent the British Fleet proceeding up to Antwerp?"

We know perfectly well that she would not have attempted anything of the kind, because she had no means of preventing it. Her pretensions only revived when she had erected cupola forts at Flushing and placed Krupp 11.2 inch guns inside them. Those pretensions include the resumption of the claim that the Scheldt is a Dutch river, that Holland alone is responsible for its neutrality, and that this neutrality must be enforced against Belgium, the co-partner in the navigation of the stream. The pretension is simply grotesque, and reminds us of Canning's lines:

"In matters of business the fault of the Dutch
Is giving too little and asking too much."

In 1831 the Dutch Government put forward very much the same pretension. It based its claim on the law of nations because it held both banks of the lower Scheldt, but it went on to protest its good intentions, declaring that it had no intention of hindering the navigation of the Scheldt "except when the defence of the kingdom during a war expressly required it." The Powers constituting the London Conference made short work of this pretension in a memorandum dated January 4th, 1832. "With regard to the principle of the law of nations, the Dutch Government cannot be ignorant of the fact that the general law of nations is subordinate to the conventional law of nations, and that when a matter has been regulated by a convention it is solely in accordance with that convention that it must be decided." In plain language, the Dutch claim to the exclusive sovereignty of the Scheldt was rejected. When the final arrangements were made in 1839, the eminent Belgian patriot and statesman, Charles Rogier, said in his report: "It might be asked what more, unless it were the possession of one of the banks of the river to the sea, could Belgium desire to have in the division of the sovereignty of the river?"*

* Rogier was Minister of Foreign Affairs and knew all the facts. He was convinced that a joint sovereignty had been established. Besides, it must not be forgotten that this concession was the compensation for the surrender of Belgian claims to Dutch Flanders, the district on the left bank of the Scheldt below Antwerp. See my "History of Belgium," Vol. II., p. 136.

The laxity of the Belgian Government in 1911 does not weaken the position assigned to the Scheldt by the Powers in 1831. Holland possesses no exclusive sovereign rights over the Scheldt. Belgium has a perfect right to request England or France or Russia to send her help by that river, and Holland has no right to stop the squadron or flotilla. It is not even necessary to employ Dutch pilots, for the Belgic-Dutch regulations for the navigation of the Scheldt provided that half the pilots should be Belgians. If the Dutch forts were to fire on such a squadron they would not merely commit an act of war, but they would be endeavouring, vainly of course, to revive "those ancient privileges of Governments which had disappeared for ever," as they were told in 1832.

Let us leave the juridical sphere for that of hard fact. Belgium is engaged in a struggle for national existence produced by the attack of a ruthless neighbour. At the present moment that national existence is limited to the fortified city of Antwerp. After evincing noble heroism, after suffering incredible and incalculable outrages and injury, Belgium is reduced to her last redoubt. The only available door to that redoubt is held and commanded, we are told, by Holland.

Holland has maintained her neutrality. She has remained a spectator of the greatest crime in modern history. She is quite close to the scene, and she knows better than anyone else the infamies that have been perpetrated in Belgium. Yet she looks on placidly and unmoved. More than that, she claims that she has the key of the Scheldt in her pocket, and declares that she will keep it there. If the neutrality of that river, as she chooses to define it, is broken her majesty will be grievously offended, and she will have no choice but to join Germany. It will not be disputed that if she decides to do wrong herself she could not find a more suitable partner than the chief wrong-doer.

But what have been her relations during the last twenty years with Belgium? Is there not a society for Dutch-Belgian co-operation? Is there not a formal order to the Dutch Army that they are to look upon "the Belgian soldiers as true brothers"? Has it not been repeatedly

proclaimed by the most responsible writers at Amsterdam and The Hague that the two kingdoms of the Netherlands have a common interest, and that the fate of one must quickly be the fate of the other? Yet Holland has looked, and still looks, on the agony of its brother with seeming indifference. In the war raging throughout Europe of Might against Right, neutrality is criminal; it is doubly criminal in the case of Holland with regard to Belgium.

But the Dutch may say: "We are only a small State, our army is not very big, we have much to lose." They would be offended if they were told that they were smaller than Belgium, they have a larger army than she had when she began the defence of her independence and honour, and the surest way to lose a great possession like Java is to show that the holder is unworthy of retaining it. If they had made cautious calculations beforehand, neither Greece nor Servia would have risen to the height of the reputation and influence they are acquiring in Europe. There is a right course and a wrong course. "There are no little States, only little minds and men," exclaimed the great Belgian thinker, Emile Banning; and the Dutch would do well to take the lesson to their hearts.

But we must allow for the idiosyncrasies of different peoples, and the Dutch are more likely to understand the matter if it is put before them as a purely business transaction. Although they declare themselves ready to embark upon a hopeless war, in which all countries would be against them except Germany for the principle of the sovereignty of the Scheldt if England were to send succour to Antwerp, they show quite a different sentiment when it is proposed to them that they should come actively to the aid of Belgium. Then they say: "We are only a little State, our army is so small, what would be its use against the millions of Germany?"

We will make every possible concession to Dutch opinion. Their army is not a very large one, but it has great traditions. If the question were put to the Dutch army: "Shall we aid Belgium or not?" the reply would undoubtedly be worthy of the descendants of the men who fought at Malplaquet and Waterloo. And when reference is made to the millions of Germany it may be asked whether there

are not other millions in the opposite scale, and whether every month's delay will not make the preponderance against her more marked? What is the true moral that the Dutch people should draw from this question of numbers? Is it not that they should decide to play their part worthily in this great European crisis before the swing of the pendulum has made their co-operation useless and of no value? When Germany has been brought to her knees, when the avenging hosts are inflicting retribution on German cities, and above all on the robbers' nest called Berlin ("die Rauber Stadt"), it will be rather too late in the day for Holland to join in the hunt.

At the present moment Holland has the best opportunity that is ever likely to present itself for efficacious and profitable intervention. Her army, including the Landweer, is mobilised. There is no reason to doubt that there are nearly 300,000 men with the colours, and a very large part of them are assembled in close proximity to the German western frontier. The strategical position of Holland is exceptionally advantageous, for it provides the best route for reaching the most exposed part of Germany. The great mining and industrial region between Crefeld and Essen lies open and unguarded to an offensive movement from Venlo and Roermond. Germany has denuded this region of troops to supply her needs elsewhere, trusting that she has hoodwinked the Dutch Government into believing that Holland at least is safe from her rapacity. Safe from her rapacity! Why, it is only the other day that Germany appropriated the Lower Ems, bottled up the Dutch fishing fleet at Delfzijl, and forbade the Dutch to look on at what they were doing at Emden. In the south the Dutch Government is most exacting about the Scheldt; in the north it accepts without protest the theft of one of its waterways in broad daylight. Truly the glamour of German power must have deprived the Dutch public of the capacity of measuring facts and drawing right conclusions, when we see them so apathetic about the infraction of their indisputable rights on the Lower Ems,* and so aggressive about their imaginary exclusive claims over the Scheldt.

* The details are given at the end of this article.

The value of Dutch co-operation, then, is greatest at the present moment. Promptly rendered, it would ensure the security of Antwerp, which is not as perfect as is generally supposed, and at the same time it would open out the way for striking a blow at the most vulnerable point of Western Germany. In plain words, Holland has the chance of rendering the Allies a service far in excess of her military resources. If she decided on action at the present moment, she could contribute materially to the shortening of the war, and thus render a sterling service that all would appreciate. But the opportunity may easily slip by. Antwerp may pass through the peril that besets her, the Germans may be driven back to their own territory; when the tide of success has turned definitely against the provokers of this European strife, then the co-operation of Holland will seem of little moment and value. Now, and not at a later stage, is the time for Holland to strike in with the greatest use to the Allies, and with the greatest reward to herself.

It is possible that the idea of a direct reward has not yet occurred to Dutch politicians as the reciprocation for their intervention, if timed to the right moment, which is certainly now at hand. But just as there is certain to be a larger Belgium after the war is over, so might there be an enlarged Holland through the recovery of territory that Prussia wrested from the House of Orange by simple highway robbery.

This was in 1744-7, when Prussia deprived the Count of East-Frisia of his possessions north and east of the Ems as the price of allowing him to be elected Stadthalter of Holland under the style of William IV. Napoleon restored this province to Holland, and the recovery of the Ems Valley with the East-Frisian Islands would be a very valuable rounding off of the Dutch dominions. At least it would put an end to disputes in the Dollart, and the possession of Borkum would ensure control of the navigable channel of the Western Ems. It is therefore sufficiently clear that when the time comes to draw afresh the map of Europe there will be means to reward Holland for any good and timely service she may have rendered. But of course the service must have been rendered, and it

will have to be something more active than sitting on the fence as a passive spectator.

Holland stands, therefore, at the parting of the ways. She can continue to be neutral, and by interpreting her neutrality in regard to the Scheldt, as if it was her sole possession, she can injure Belgium and embarrass her friends. The injury and embarrassment will be in proportion to the straits to which Antwerp may yet be reduced. But if she continues in this course she cannot expect any reward, and she must be prepared to receive the condemnation of all right-thinking persons.

On the other hand, she can show her sympathy with Belgium by combining with her in resisting the violation of her soil and of the good faith of treaties. She may make common cause with the Belgians not merely because she has so often called them "our brothers of the Netherlands," but because she must know, after what they have done, that no promises made by the Germans will be held binding. If they carry the day, Holland's time for being plundered must come sooner or later, and then she would receive no sympathy or support from any man. These are the considerations that should weigh with Dutch opinion. Given the desire to co-operate in the speedy deliverance of Belgium from the brutal tread of the German invader—and I do not doubt it is very widespread in Holland—there remains the further practical question: What is the best moment for intervention? There can be no question that it has arrived. The need of Belgium for effective co-operation could not be greater, and at the same time the high tide of German encroachment has begun to ebb. Holland cannot have a better opportunity of joining the Grand Alliance of the twentieth century, in emulation of those great Netherlanders who founded the similar pact of the seventeenth century, than now invites her prompt decision.

But, in any case, the question of the freedom of the Scheldt route to Antwerp will have to be settled, and in a sense favourable to the needs and wishes of Belgium. The fortification of Flushing did not give the case of the freedom of the Scheldt away. Holland might line the river with forts, but that would not alter the status given

to the Scheldt by Europe in formal convention. They would only provide the Dutch Government with the provisional means of attempting to alter or undo the decrees of Europe on a matter which is international and not local. But however obstinate the Dutch may be in character, it is inconceivable that they would commit the stupendous and costly act of folly of firing from those forts on a British expedition sent to Antwerp either to relieve the place or to take part in operations for the expulsion of the German invaders. I have no doubt that the Flushing cannon are excellent of their kind and quite up-to-date, but in reality they are no more to be employed against the British Navy than if they were the painted wooden guns that used to be displayed on the walls of Chinese towns. Of the supreme madness of turning their batteries on British warships or transports we must acquit the Dutch Government until positive proof to the contrary is forthcoming.

But our main anxiety must be for Antwerp. We know that it is the last visible token of Belgian independence, but we do not know that it is impregnable. Strong as it is, we have reasons for apprehension if a sufficiently numerous German force should ever entirely invest it. The real safeguard of Antwerp is to prevent such a contingency from taking place. It can be prevented by British and other Allied troops having a free unobstructed way up the Scheldt. It can be prevented by the active intervention of Holland in the war. She has only to act promptly and in force along the German lines of communication, and then not merely will a close investment of Antwerp become impossible, but a German retreat must become inevitable. Never had a small State like Holland such a chance of playing a big part in a grave European crisis as is now offered to the Netherlander nation and Government. Will they seize it, or blindly let the opportunity pass by?

P.S. Holland did not take it. Antwerp has fallen. The sequel lies in the future. While thinking that she might have played a braver part, we have no sympathy with such insulting proposals as a suggested purchase of Zealand, the home of the Sea-Beggars. We wish to see Holland enlarged not diminished.

A GERMAN ENCROACHMENT ON THE LOWER EMS*

AS everyone knows, or those who do not know may be referred to history, States are great robbers. In old days the excuse was simply the law of the stronger; modern usages require more subtle devices. An instance presents itself in the Dollart and the Lower Ems, where Germany has perpetrated at the expense of a weak neighbour the first stage of a theft which may be fraught with serious consequences.

In all Dutch maps down to the present hour, in all German maps down to at least the year 1900, the German-Dutch frontier in the Dollart is marked by a line from north to south, denoting clearly enough the boundary on the eastern and western sides of Holland and Prussia respectively. On all these maps without exception no attempt was made to trace the boundary in the river, but as it has always been the unbroken usage to regard the thalweg, or fairway, as the boundary between States holding the opposite banks of a river, the assumption has always been that the middle line of the Ems channel formed the boundary here. No one ever questioned it until a few years ago, and we shall show that even as recently as 1896 Prussia admitted the equal rights and position of the Netherlands in the Lower Ems.

In 1911 a new edition of the German Staff Map was brought out—sheet 172 containing the Lower Ems and the greater part of the Dollart. Some little time elapsed before the critics, who examined it more or less casually in the first place, awoke to the important and startling change that had been introduced into it. In the first place

* *Morning Post*, May 1, 1913.

the eastern boundary of Holland in the Dollart had been slightly contracted so as to terminate not at the river channel, but in the sand of the sea polder specified as Die Geise, lying south of it. But this change was slight in comparison with what followed. For the first time in cartographical history, Holland was arbitrarily provided with a northern boundary or barrier effectively cutting her off from the Ems altogether. The boundary is traced in a straight line to Reide, the extreme north-east point of the Province of Groningen, and thence drawn along the shore past Termunterzyl, Delfzyl, Watum, &c., thus excluding Holland from the Ems altogether. It is not surprising if the *gros bonnets* at The Hague rubbed their eyes and wondered what it all meant. They even began to study the question a little closely, and to look up the authorities on the subject, and they were somewhat comforted to find that England had a right to a word in the matter, for one of the texts bearing upon it is the Treaty of the 2nd of July, 1824, between the King of Great Britain, Ireland, and Hanover, on the one side, and the King of the Netherlands on the other. Moreover, in the year 1800 the British Government and Courts had dealt pretty trenchantly with a claim made by Prussia in connection with the capture of the Dutch ship *Twee Gebroeders* that, as the Emperor of Germany had, in 1424, given his fief Count Ulrich command of the Ems estuary to the exclusion of Groningen, our men-of-war had violated her neutrality.

This piece of presumption was typical of Prussian methods, and it may be pointed out that, prior to 1866, Prussia only held East Frisia from 1746 to 1814, when she handed it over to Hanover. It is one of the Hohenzollern habits to invent claims which the original holders never thought of putting forward. But between 1800 and 1910 Prussia had done many things which from an ordinary standpoint would seem to tie her hands and put her out of court. It is hardly necessary to say that between 1814 and 1866 the relations of the Netherlands Government with the British Government, as being joined with that of Hanover, down to 1837, and with the Hanoverian Government after the separation of the two

Kingdoms on the accession of Queen Victoria by the operation of the Salic Law, from 1837 to 1866, were without a cloud. In those days Delfzijl was the port favoured by trade having a far better water-way than Emden, but in the last eight years the trade of Emden has sextupled, while that of Delfzijl has remained stationary.

In 1870, during the Franco-German War, Prussia, turning her attention to the question for the first time, made certain proposals to the Netherlands Government for the removal of the buoys and barrels in the Lower Ems in the event of any attempt by the French Fleet. The proposals were based on the assumption that the rights and position of the Netherlands were here exactly equal to those of Prussia. That country, for it is a Prussian affair, no doubt pretends that these were mere regulations of no judicial effect, but she cannot say the same of the regular Convention signed on her own initiative in 1896. By that time Borkum, the island at the eastern entrance of the Ems, which Germany has now so strongly fortified, had become of importance, and it was necessary to supplement "the buoys and barrels" with lighthouses. Representations were made at The Hague, and as the result a Convention was signed at Berlin on the 16th of October, 1896. The preamble sets forth that it was an agreement between the two countries for lighting the opposite banks of the Lower Ems, as well as for marking the navigable channels. The Dutch text reads: "tot regeling der wederzijdsche verplichtingen van Nederland en Pruisen ter zake van het onderhoud van het kustlicht op Borkum alsmede van de betonning, bebakening en verlichting der vaarwegen van de Beneden Ems en van haar monden."

Article 1 specifies that Prussia is to take charge of the lighting and staking of the Lower Ems for Borkum, Randsel, Pilsum, and Campen, all places on the eastern channel, whilst the Netherlands are to perform the same duties on the whole of the Delfzijl, Watum, &c., shore—that is to say, for the western channel. Significant as this article is, the next adds an additional piquancy to the affair. Article 2 stipulates that each State shall pay "the exact half of the total cost," and under this head the Dutch authorities have had to make a small annual pay-

ment to meet the superior cost on the German side. As a final reference to this Convention, it may be mentioned that Article 13 gives "both of the contracting parties an equal right to remove buoys, &c., and to put out lights when it is at war."

In face of these citations it is impossible for anyone to deny that Prussia has always admitted Dutch sovereignty over the left half of the Lower Ems from the Dollart to the true entrance of the river between the Dutch island of Rottum and the German island of Borkum. Let us treat the whole of this water region as firm land, as it was prior to the thirteenth century, with the Ems flowing between, and there could only be one conclusion as to where the frontier lay. It would be the fair water way in the river or thalweg, which would be common to both. Yet Prussia on her official map, and all the other maps and atlases published since 1911 have followed suit, has appropriated the whole of the Lower Ems, and suppressed Dutch rights which in 1896 she admitted to be equal to her own.

Much more might be said, and many more texts might be cited, but the present object is merely to draw attention to what has been done, and enough has probably been written for the purpose. At The Hague the idea seems to be that this encroachment on Dutch sovereign rights may be the preliminary to the construction of the projected ship canal from the Rhine to the Ems, which might divert the Rhine trade from Rotterdam. But it is probable that Prussia has a more immediate aim. She intends to complete her chain of naval stations and fortresses by adding Emden to the others, and at least it is contemplated to make the Lower Ems behind Borkum a station for torpedo squadrons. The ousting of Holland from the river is obviously an essential preliminary, and, besides, Germany may be dimly conscious of the fact that the Lower Ems as a gulf or estuary held by two States is in international law "an arm of the sea" open to all nations.

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